

FOURTH REPORT
ON
PUBLIC RECORDS
1892



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FOURTH REPORT

ON THE

CUSTODY AND CONDITION OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS.

OF

PARISHES, TOWNS, AND COUNTIES.

Massachusetts

BY

ROBERT T. SWAN,
COMMISSIONER.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER ON PUBLIC RECORDS
OF PARISHES, TOWNS, AND COUNTIES,
9 PARK STREET, BOSTON, MASS., Jan. 1, 1892.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

I have the honor to submit the fourth report of this commission. That the report contains much fault-finding is not from any spirit of pessimism, but because the facts warrant it, and those are not presented at their worst. To so present them would cast reflection upon certain individuals, where the law or the city or town is in fault.

By chapter 103 of the Resolves of 1889, which continued the commission, it expires on March 1, 1892. The history of its creation and early work are fully given in the first report, presented to the Legislature in January, 1889; and the second recites the resolve which continued it, and gave it the additional power to take such measures as should secure the preservation of the records.

At the risk of inviting the charge of magnifying the office, I do not hesitate to state that no more important work has ever been laid out by the Legislature; no work has been so far delayed beyond the time when it should have been commenced; and there is nothing more important to the whole people than that the work should be continued, and a supervision exercised over the records of the counties, cities, towns, churches, and their associate bodies. In making this statement I but repeat the opinion of many who have given much attention to the matter.

Mr. Justin Winsor, who is an acknowledged authority upon this and kindred subjects, writing from London in regard to the care given to the public records in England, says: "The progress of the movements which have resulted

in the present conditions here can be readily matched with ourselves, if we are wise enough to move forward in much the same way, for the circumstances in England fifty years ago were not far from the same which prevail with our government to-day." Massachusetts has been the first to be "wise enough to move forward" in this work, and is already looked to by leading men in other States as an example.

April 1, 1634, the court ordered that the record of the land of every free inhabitant should be "sufficient assurance" to him. Sept. 9, 1639, records were ordered to be kept of all wills, administrations, and inventories; and courts, magistrates, and commissioners were ordered to record their judgments with the evidence in each case "to be kept to posterity." Dec. 10, 1641, every town was ordered to choose a "clerk of the writs;" and Oct. 20, 1646, a clerk or some one was to be "appointed or ordained to keep a record of marriages, births, and deaths."

By these successive steps the records in the registries of deeds, registries of probate, the courts, and towns, were authorized; and the Commonwealth has constantly been requiring by new legislation that more complete records shall be kept, and that public and private rights shall depend upon the matter recorded, until now the amount annually paid in the Commonwealth at public expense, and required to be paid by individuals, must aggregate thousands of dollars. To pay for making these records and then allow them to go to destruction is folly in the extreme.

Nov. 11, 1647, it was ordered that, to the end that all records of the Colony "may be safely preserved and improved, a strong press made of very firm oak planks be kept in some place convenient at Boston, by direction of the Governor." A press was also to be provided wherever any court of record was holden, and from time to time legislation tending to the safety of the records has been enacted. May 15, 1851, county commissioners, city governments, and selectmen, were ordered "to have all books of public record or registry," belonging to the counties, cities, and towns, "well and strongly bound, and other papers and documents filed and arranged in a careful and orderly manner." They were also ordered to provide, at the expense of the county,

city, or town, “a suitable place for the safe keeping and preservation of the public records and other valuable documents, where they shall be deposited and securely kept.” The clerk or register of any county, city, or town, was ordered to “keep all records and written documents in his sole custody, and in no case except upon summons in due form of law to have them or cause or permit them to be removed or taken away.” April 10, 1857, city governments and selectmen were ordered to provide, at the expense of their respective cities and towns, safes “of ample size for the safe preservation of books of record or registry, and other important documents or papers belonging to said city or town;” and it was made the duty of the clerk of each city and town to keep such records and papers in the safe “at all times when they were not wanted for use.”

The detailed account of the condition of affairs presented in the last and this report will show how little attention has been paid to these later laws, or to any of the provisions of chapter 37, relating to public records; and, while under the spur of the State supervision improvement has been made, without that supervision the same neglect will be continued.

If any system of State inspection and supervision is to be continued, the laws in regard to public records should be revised, and authority given to some one to compel compliance with them. Without that supervision affairs will drift along as they have in the past, and it will matter little what law is upon the statute books.

TOWN RECORDS.

The town records have received my principal attention during the year, both because they have been the most neglected, and because I have desired to report upon as large a number of towns as possible, that the Legislature might fully realize the condition of affairs. The comments upon town records in the last report, based upon inspection of the records in the towns there named, will apply with equal force to the towns here reported upon. Many of the latter which would have appeared as grossly negligent in 1890, have made improvement by providing safes, and

appear in a better light than neighboring towns inspected in that year. The date of the visit of inspection is given in parentheses.

When records are reported as in good condition, exception must usually be made in regard to the volumes formerly furnished by the State for recording births, marriages, and deaths, as these were never suitable for use.

ABINGTON (June 30, 1891). The town offices are in a brick savings-bank building, where there is a good vault in which all the records are kept, except the current, which the clerk has in a safe in his office. The records are in good condition, with the exception of one or two early volumes which need binding. A copy of the first volume of town proceedings has been made but not certified. The assessors' lists from 1783 to date are preserved, the very early ones, which were in small pamphlets, having been arranged and substantially bound. The collectors' records for many years are in the town office, but not arranged or in the vault. Marriage certificates and burial returns have all been preserved since 1873, and there are a few from 1860. The rebellion record has been recently written up as far as possible.

ACTON (Oct. 26, 1891). Wooden town hall, but no records are kept there. The clerk has a safe at his house, where the current records and all records of births, marriages, and deaths are kept. All the other records of the town are in a brick vault in the public library building. The records are all in good condition, and all the files have been systematically arranged and placed in the vault. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The old valuation lists from 1772 are preserved. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

ACUSHNET (Sept. 14, 1891). Wooden town hall at Acushnet Village, in which there is a safe new this spring, where the selectmen's and assessors' records are kept. The clerk has a small safe of doubtful value in his store at Long Plain, where his records are kept; this is full. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887, and possibly longer. The collectors' records have nearly all been returned to the town. The records are all in good order.

ANDOVER (May 28, 1891). Brick town hall. The clerk keeps the office open in business hours, and is clerk of all boards except water and health. There is a very large safe, which in its position

is considered absolutely safe, used for the most important records of all departments, a large vault being used for the storage of all old records and files of papers. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1882, and there are a few earlier. The records of the collectors prior to 1882 are in private possession. The assessors' lists are complete in bound volumes from 1680. The rebellion record has not been written up, but the record of all soldiers has been printed by a private citizen. The clerk has the index of all instruments as required, and another more in detail. The records are in good order. The first volume of proprietors' records has been interleaved and bound, and is practically complete, although some leaves are mutilated. There are two volumes made up evidently from copies of deeds and other land records. A second volume of births, marriages, and deaths, which was much mutilated, has been interleaved and rebound, and the missing information supplied in most cases. All births, marriages, and deaths, and intentions of marriage to 1723, have been printed in the "Andover Townsman." The water commissioner and board of health have separate offices, and their records are in safes.

ARLINGTON (Oct. 21, 1891). Brick town hall. The clerk is clerk, treasurer, collector, water register, and clerk of the selectmen, and until last year was clerk of the assessors also. There is a good vault, in which the town records, files, plans, etc., are kept, but it is so full as to prevent convenient arrangement of the papers. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1870, and possibly earlier. The collectors' records have been returned to the town since about 1850. The rebellion record has been written up. The records of the First Church and Parish have been placed in the town vault for safety. The clerk has a file of printed town warrants.

ASHBY (Oct. 30, 1891). Wooden town hall, used also as a school-house, with the town office in the basement. There is an old safe of doubtful value there, unused, the lock of which has been made useless by burglars. A large safe contains the older records, and a small safe at the clerk's house contains the later. The valuation lists from 1816, in pamphlets, are in the safe; those from 1790 to 1815, together with many papers dating from very early times, were carefully filed by a clerk many years ago, and are kept in closets in the office. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records for several occasional years are in possession of the town.

ASHLAND (July 7, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the town officers have a room. There is a small safe there, containing some miscellaneous records. Files of papers are not in a safe. The clerk has a small old safe in a building occupied by him as a printing office, in which all his records are kept. This contains papers also which cannot be arranged owing to want of room. The valuation lists are in the town hall, not in a safe. The money has been voted by the town for a vault. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1871, except for a part of 1891, during the term of the former clerk. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

ATTLEBOROUGH (June 3, 1891). The town offices are in a brick business block, and the clerk's office is open in business hours. There is a good vault there which is crowded to overflowing, all the records of the town being kept there. The general condition of the older records is very bad. The former clerk had urged the binding of them for several years, but the town would appropriate no money. The earliest records of births, marriages, and deaths are contained in some thirty loose sheets, badly mutilated, which were collected by the clerk's assistant and are kept in a bundle. Most of the earliest records of births, marriages, and deaths, town meetings, and all the proprietors' records, are in very bad condition, in remnants of parchment covers, and much mutilated. Some very late volumes were at a book-binder's, in Providence, for binding. Many of the old records, which were in possession of the clerks before a town office was established, are known to be lost. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1875. There are copies of assessors' lists from 1794, though many of the originals are missing. The collectors' records are not in possession of the town. The rebellion record has been written up.

AVON (Dec. 9, 1891). No town hall. The town offices are in a wooden building used also for stores and as a dwelling. There is no safe there, but there is a good safe in the engine house opposite, where the clerk keeps his records and papers. The assessors' records are kept at the house of the chairman, in a safe of his own. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since the organization of the town, and the collectors' records are also in the town's possession. The record of births made by the first clerk is very deficient in Christian names.

BARRE (Aug. 29, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which part of the records have been kept until recently; they are now in a room in the basement of the Woods Memorial Library Building, which is considered fire-proof. The town clerk has a small safe of doubtful value in his store in a wooden building, where the records of births, marriages, and deaths, and his later records, are kept. There are two large safes in the library building, one containing the early records of town proceedings, intentions of marriage, and miscellaneous records; the other containing the assessors' records from 1800, which are all bound. The first volume of town proceedings, the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, and some volumes of miscellaneous records, need binding. Marriage certificates have been preserved in full from 1870, and partially from 1866 to 1870. The files of papers have been partially arranged, and are in book-cases in the building. The rebellion record has been written up. The clerk has commenced copying the births, marriages, and deaths. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

BELLINGHAM (July 16, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a large safe purchased this year, and a small older one. All the town records and papers are kept in these, except a few books of current records which are at the clerk's house, not in a safe. Many old records and papers, which the clerk has rescued from an old chest and other receptacles, and which he is about to sort and file, are now in the new safe. The proprietors' records, the first and second volume of town proceedings, the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, and one treasurer's book, are in bad order and need binding. The valuation lists from 1811 are bound, and among the papers to be arranged are lists for many years between 1767 and 1811. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887, and there are some bearing date as early as 1851. The clerk has two volumes of records of John Bates, justice of the peace, from 1808 to 1848, and one of Saville Metcalf, from 1846 to 1860, containing among other matters the records of marriage ceremonies performed by them. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

BELMONT (Oct. 24, 1891). Brick town hall, used for town offices, library, and savings bank. There is a good vault, in which the clerk's and selectmen's records are kept. The assessors have a safe in which their records are kept. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1870, and certificates of births since 1876. The collectors' records from the organization

of the town are in its possession. The town plans are all in the vault. All papers are filed and arranged, and everything is in good condition.

BERKLEY (Sept. 22, 1891). Wooden town hall. The clerk has a very small safe in his dwelling, insufficient for his records, and of very doubtful value. The last two volumes of the assessors' records are at his house, not in a safe; the others being in the town hall, not in a safe. The first volume of records is in bad condition and needs binding; the others are in good condition. A committee was appointed some time since to attend to making copies of the records, but nothing has been done in the matter. There is an accumulation of files of papers at the town hall, unprotected from fire. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town as a rule. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for about six years.

BILLERICA (July 22, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a small old safe which contains the clerk's records. The selectmen's records are in possession of the chairman, not in a safe. The later records of the assessors are in possession of the chairman, not in a safe; those from 1822, except 1823 and 1825, are in a closet in the town office. The first, second, third, and fourth volumes of town proceedings, and the first and second of births, marriages, and deaths, are in bad order and need binding. The first and second volumes of proceedings, and the births, marriages, and deaths up to 1855, have all been copied within the year. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887, but are not in the safe, as there is no room. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. When the present clerk came into office in 1855 the records were scattered about the town, and the fourth volume of town proceedings, covering the years from 1753 to 1778, has never been found.

BOXBOROUGH (Oct. 26, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a room called the town office. There is a small old safe there, unused. In the entry is a large new safe which contains all the records. One old volume is in bad condition. The assessors' lists from 1795 to 1844 are in sheets, unbound. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved and filed during the term of the present clerk, since 1885, and there may be some earlier ones in two chests containing miscellaneous files. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

BROOKLINE (Oct. 9, 1891). Stone town hall. The clerk has a large vault in his office, where all his records are kept. The first

volume is in frail condition, and is kept in a wooden case made for its protection. The second volume needs binding. Other records are in good condition. The clerk has most of the town papers, ancient and modern, plans, etc., in his vault, filed as conveniently as space will allow. A large vault has just been completed in the basement, which will be occupied, as soon as dry, for the storage of the overflow from the vault and the safes of all departments. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1852, although those for 1858 and 1859 were lost some years ago, while moving to the new town hall. The clerk has recently obtained a small book called the "Selectmen's Book," beginning with 1774. The treasurer and collector has a safe for his records, and uses the clerk's vault for the overflow. The collectors' records have been returned to the town since 1850. The assessors have a safe in which the current records are kept, the earlier ones being in the clerk's vault. Those from 1841 are bound, and the lists prior to that, from very early date, are packed away in boxes in the vault. The water board has a safe for its records.

CANTON (Oct. 7, 1891). Brick town hall, containing the town offices. The clerk has a safe there in which his records are kept. The selectmen have one also for theirs. There is a small vault in which the older records are kept as they become less frequently used. All records of town meetings have been copied, and by provisions of town by-laws duplicates are kept, the originals and copies being kept in different places. Records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1870. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The valuation lists for 1796, 1799 to 1834, 1836 to 1847, and 1850 to 1891, are in the vault, those to 1827 being in pamphlet form. The town has copies of the tax lists of Stoughton from 1727 to 1796. Prior to 1881 records and files were scattered about in various places in the town.

CARLISLE (Oct. 22, 1891). The lower floor of a church is used as the town hall and town office. There is a very small old safe, apparently worthless, containing nine volumes of the old records, which fill it. All other records and papers at the hall are in a book-case or chest. The clerk has no safe; all the later records, and the ancient records of births, marriages, and deaths, being in drawers at his house. The valuation lists are complete, the oldest being in the records of town proceedings, those for many years following being in pamphlets. Very little information could be obtained in regard to the ancient files. About 1870 a committee

went through the papers, which had been carefully preserved by a former clerk, and the destruction of many is said to have been authorized. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

CARVER (July 6, 1891). Wooden town hall, built in 1887, with a large safe purchased this year, and a small old one, in one or the other of which the clerk's records and the later records of the assessors are kept. Found a chest of old papers, containing among other things old valuation lists in confusion. The records are in good condition. There seems to be no record of deaths prior to 1843, except a partial record in a volume arranged by families. A copy of the location of highways contained in the older records is being made in a separate volume. The collectors' records from 1881 to 1884 only are in possession of the town. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1879.

CHELMSFORD (Dec. 5, 1891). Wooden town hall, containing town offices and a social library. There is a good vault here, containing all the older records and papers. The clerk has a small town safe in his store, where the current records are kept. The selectmen have a safe in their room, containing their records and the later valuation lists. Several of the oldest records need binding, the others being generally in good condition. The clerk has filed nearly all the town papers, some of as early date as 1717, and has made a catalogue of all records and printed volumes belonging to the town. He has also indexed all records. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town, except for a very few of the latest years. The rebellion record has been written up.

CHELSEA (May 15, 1891). Brick city hall. The city clerk has a good vault and a large safe, in which all his records, which are in excellent condition, are kept. The city engineer has a good vault in which his plans are kept. The assessors' records for a few of the later years are in a safe in their office; the earlier ones from 1805, bound and in fair condition, being in the city engineer's vault. There is a single valuation list there for the year 1785. The treasurer and collector has a good vault. The collectors' records from 1850 are in possession of the city, and there may be earlier ones which were not readily accessible. There is a large vault in the basement, perfectly dry, used for the overflow from the departments. The collector has adopted canvas bindings for

his records, finding that they are not injured by the burning of gas in the vault, as leather bindings are. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1849. The water board and board of health have rooms in a separate building, and their records are in safes.

CHICOPEE (Nov. 19, 1891). Brick city hall, with a large fire-proof vault. The city clerk is also treasurer, and at present keeps all records of the city in the vault, with the exception of some of the valuation books, which are in an old safe. The files are in the vault also. Action is being taken towards providing additional fire-proof receptacles. The records are in excellent condition. The clerk has discarded the books provided by the State, and adopted those of his own. The returns of deaths have nearly all been preserved since the establishment of the town, and the returns of births since 1887. The collectors' records are kept in a bank vault, and nearly all of the old ones are in possession of the city. The records of the overseers of the poor and the plans of public work are in the vault.

COHASSET (Dec. 3, 1891). Wooden town hall, used also as a public library. The selectmen have a room on the second floor, where there is a safe used by the clerk, selectmen, and treasurer, for the later records and copies of the older. There is a large old safe in the hallway on the lower floor, where the old records are kept, including valuation lists in pamphlets apparently complete from 1753. The collectors' records from about 1860 have been returned to the town, and are now in this safe; both safes are, however, full. The first volume of town proceedings needs repairing, the other records being in good condition. The clerk keeps part of the current records in his own safe at his store. The births, marriages, and deaths have been preserved since 1873, and filed since 1887.

CONCORD (Nov. 30, 1891). Brick town hall, containing the town offices. There is a good brick vault used by the clerk, which is used also for the records not in use by the other departments. The selectmen have a safe in their room, used for their records and those of the water board and board of health. The assessors' records for the last two or three years are in possession of the chairman, not in a safe. The valuation lists, in pamphlets from 1796 to 1825, from 1826 to 1849 in thin leather covers, and from 1850 bound, are in good condition. A few of the oldest volumes of town proceedings, and births, marriages, and deaths, are in

bad order and need renovating and binding; part of these have, however, been copied. The copies are kept in the vault of the insurance company, near by. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for about thirty years, but not filed. An appropriation of five hundred dollars has been made this year for printing the early records of births, marriages, and deaths.

DARTMOUTH (June 1, 1891). No town office. An old safe, apparently worthless, is in an L of the clerk's dwelling, having been removed from the barn of the previous clerk. It contains the clerk's records, and is full. The ancient records are in the worst possible condition. There are three packages of loose leaves bundled up and marked "Loose portions of the Dartmouth records," in such disarrangement as to make it impossible to give dates. One volume of births, marriages, deaths, and marriage intentions, with dates entered promiscuously from 1747 to 1820; one smaller volume from 1722 to 1768; and one old volume of ear marks, are greatly dilapidated. The dilapidated volumes reported in 1890 as in New Bedford are still there. One early volume of town meetings, and one of births, marriages, and deaths, have been repaired and rebound. About twenty valuation books were in the attic of the clerk's house, together with public documents, etc.; those from 1858 to date were in possession of the clerk of the assessors, seven miles away. Some previous to 1858 were put into the hands of one of the selectmen at North Dartmouth, their whereabouts now being uncertain.

DEDHAM (Oct. 20, 1891). Stone town hall, in which the clerk has an office and a safe. The current records are kept there. The selectmen also have an office there. There is a large vault in the brick Memorial Building, where, by arrangement with the historical society, any town or church records can be kept, and all records not in the clerk's safe or selectmen's vault are kept there. Many churches have deposited their records there also. The society has collected all old records and papers of any kind relating to the town that can be found, and these have been arranged and deposited in the vault. All of the old records have been rebound, and are in good condition. Marriage certificates have been preserved and filed since about 1850. Many original files, none, however, ancient, are in drawers in the town office. The collectors' records since 1850 have been returned to the town.

DIGHTON (Sept. 22, 1891). Wooden town hall, where the assessors' records from 1830 are kept, not in a safe. The clerk has an old safe in a small tool-house where all his records are

kept. This is crowded full, and would be valueless in a building of any size. Part of the files of papers are in his house, unprotected from fire. The first volume of proprietors' records, and the first and second of town proceedings, need binding. The first volume of births, marriages, and deaths is in tatters, and, although it has been copied, has not been certified. Other records are in good order. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1881; burial returns since 1885. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been written up.

DOVER (Oct. 20, 1891). Wooden town hall, but no town office. There is a large safe there, in which the selectmen's and assessors' records are kept. There are several chests of papers in both the old and the new town hall. The clerk has a new safe at his house, in which his records are kept. The first volume has been rebound, and the records are in good condition. The later valuation lists only are kept at the town hall. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved during the term of office of the present clerk only, — two years. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town except for last year. The rebellion record is written up.

DRACUT (July 22, 1891). The town office is a very small stone building, where there is a vault in which most of the records are kept, except the marriage intentions and tax lists, which are in a safe at the clerk's office at Collinsville, five miles from the town office. There is a worthless safe in the town office, which contains some of the selectmen's records and the valuation lists for the last ten years. Some miscellaneous records and files of papers are in the book-case. The first volume of town proceedings is lost; the second, fourth, and fifth volumes have been copied, and the third is being copied. The births, marriages, and deaths have all been copied and indexed within a year, and all copies have been certified. All the records are in good order, the older ones having been rebound. The valuation lists are all in possession of the town; those from 1769 to 1824, which were in pamphlets, have been arranged and bound. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved from 1890 only. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

EVERETT (July 21, 1891). The town offices are in a business block, where the clerk, treasurer, and assessors each have safes, the clerk's being new this year. All the records are kept in these, except the record of marriages, which is in a safe at the clerk's

business office. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since the organization of the town. The collectors' records have all been returned to the town.

FALMOUTH (June 10, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a good vault, in which all records are kept except a few current ones, which are in a safe in the clerk's store. The records are in good condition with the exception of a volume of proprietors' records and the first of town. The copies that have been made have been certified. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887.

FOXBOROUGH (July 11, 1891). Wooden town hall, used also for a school-house. There is a large vault there in which all the records are kept. The assessors' records are nearly complete from 1780. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1886. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The first and second volumes of town proceedings, and the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, are in bad condition and need binding. Copies of these have been made but not certified. The papers have been filed, and those and the records are all especially well arranged for reference. The rebellion record has been written up. All plans which have been preserved are labelled and arranged in the vault.

GRAFTON (May 11, 1891). A brick block is occupied on the lower floor by the public library and for business purposes. The town offices and court room are on the second floor. Here also is the town hall. There is a good brick vault annexed to the building, which contains the town clerk's records and those of the assessors. The selectmen's records are in possession of the clerk of the board, and are not kept here. The assessors' records from 1832 are bound and in good condition. One volume of proprietors' records is in very bad order, and four volumes of records of town proceedings need binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1875. The collectors' records from 1864, and a few for occasional years earlier, are in possession of the town. Many ancient papers were burned in the fire of 1860 or 1861.

GROVELAND (May 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, used for town meetings and schools. The town hires a room in a wooden business block for offices. The town clerk has a safe for his records,

in which all are kept. These are in good condition. The selectmen have a very small safe, containing a few order books and records of personal estates. All the valuation books and a few of the collectors' records were on shelves, not in a safe. Most of the collectors' records have not been returned to the town. Marriage certificates and burial returns have only been preserved during the term of office of the present clerk.

HALIFAX (Sept. 11, 1891). Wooden town hall, which is the old original meeting-house remodelled. There is a fine large safe there, purchased in 1889, in which the selectmen's and assessors' records are kept. The selectmen are collecting all the old records and papers which can be found, and are storing them in the safe to be arranged later. The clerk has a new safe in his dwelling, where his records are kept. The first volume is in rather bad order; the others are in good condition. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1887 only. An attempt is being made to obtain the records of the collectors. The rebellion record has not been written up.

HAMILTON (May 21, 1891). No town hall. The clerk has a very small old safe in his house, safe from fire in its location, perhaps, in which his records are kept. These are in good condition, with the exception of the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, beginning with 1795, which is in paper covers and should be bound. Certificates of marriage and burial returns have been preserved only since 1890. The selectmen's room is in the basement of a church. Their records and those of the assessors from 1807 are in a good safe, which is, however, full. There is a large accumulation of papers in confusion, among them being valuation lists in pamphlet form, and generally in bad condition, covering most of the years from 1797 to 1806. The treasurers' records of Ipswich Hamlet, from 1736 to the establishment of the town in 1793, are here.

HANOVER (Sept. 21, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a large vault, which has just been completed, attached to the building. The clerk has a new safe in his dwelling and a small old one in which most of his records are kept, the overflow being placed in the new vault. The chairman of the selectmen has a new safe at his house where the current records are kept. All the other records have been placed in the vault. They are all in good order. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been mostly preserved for about twenty years. The collectors' records have been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been written up.

HAVERHILL (Oct. 6, 1891). Brick city hall, the interior of which was burned in 1889 and has been remodelled. The clerk is also treasurer, and has a fine large vault for his use. The records are all in good condition with the exception of a few of the earliest volumes, which need binding, though the pages are in good condition. Several of these have, however, been copied. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1869, and partially filed. There is a large vault on the ground floor, where the older files belonging in the clerk's office are kept, arranged in the most methodical manner. This vault is used also for the storage of records or papers belonging to other departments, for which there is not room in their vault or safe. The collector is also secretary of the assessors and clerk of the overseers of the poor. He has a large vault in which his records and those of the assessors and overseers are kept. The assessors' records are nearly complete from 1722. The collectors' records from 1841, and possibly earlier, have been returned to the city. The records of the registrars of voters are in the clerk's vault, and the plans of the city engineer are either in one or the other of the vaults. A few unimportant papers were burned in the fire of 1889.

HINGHAM (Dec. 3, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the selectmen have their room. There is a large vault here, well arranged, built about three years ago. This contains a large number of ancient files of papers, including many assessors' lists in pamphlet form or in sheets, and copies of the same, and all other records which are not contained in the safes. The law reports are also kept in the vault. There is a safe in the selectmen's room in which the oldest records and copies of them are kept. The clerk has a safe also, kept in a small out-building at his house, probably fire-proof in its present location. All the records of births, marriages, and deaths, and the records of town proceedings, from the sixth volume, are in this safe. The records are in excellent condition, all the oldest having been repaired and bound; and there are many copies of the old records, made some fifty years ago, which are also in excellent condition. A duplicate has been made of the town records for a number of years, one copy being in the clerk's safe and one in the safe at the town hall. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. Two volumes of proprietors' records have recently been recovered by the clerk. The clerk has a separate record of persons born in Hingham who die in other towns in the State, taken from the

returns at the State House, beginning in 1843. The town voted some time ago to build a fire-proof building for a town office, but for some reason reconsidered the vote later.

HOLBROOK (Oct. 16, 1891). Brick town hall, used in part for business offices. There is a good vault, in which the records and files of the clerk, selectmen, and all the town officers are kept. A wooden town hall was burned, and the contents of the town safe were wet, and most of the important records had to be rebound. All are in good condition now. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1887.

HOLDEN (Aug. 11, 1891). Wooden town hall, containing one large safe in which the assessors' records are kept, all having been preserved, and all from 1787 to the time the State commenced furnishing blank lists having been copied. There is an old safe here used by the selectmen, and still another used by the overseers of the poor. The clerk has a small very old safe in his dwelling, which is full, some miscellaneous records being in a rack, not in a safe. The records generally are in good condition, the second volume of town proceedings and two volumes of proprietors' records having been rebound. The later proprietors' records are in excellent condition, and contain plots of most of the land. Marriage certificates and burial returns have all been preserved since 1887, and some for occasional years as early as 1835. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

HOLLISTON (Oct. 23, 1891). Wooden town hall, used also as a school-house and public library. The town office is there, with two fine large safes, one used by the town clerk and selectmen, and the other by the assessors and overseers of the poor. All the records are kept in either one or the other. The records are in excellent condition, many of the older volumes being covered with canvas. The files are mostly in the safes. The valuation lists from 1825 are said to be in the assessors' safe.

HOLYOKE (Nov. 19, 1891). Stone city hall. The city clerk, who is also auditor, has a large vault used exclusively by him, which contains all his records and files. His records are in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887 only. The assessors and collector have an office together, and one safe used in common. None of the assessors' records, except for the last year, are in the safe. The collectors' records for the past years have been demanded by vote

of the city council recently, and most, if not all, have been obtained. The treasurer has a vault with a safe inside. The city engineer has a room on the second floor, no provision for the safety of his plans being made, his note-books being kept in a small safe of his own. The overseers of the poor have a small safe, put in this year, suitable for their uses for a short time only. The water commissioners have a vault where their records and plans are kept. There is a storage vault also for the overflow of all departments.

HOPKINTON (Oct. 17, 1891). Wooden town hall, the lower floor of which is used for town offices. There is a small vault and a large safe there, the latter being used exclusively by the clerk, while the vault is used by other boards and for the overflow from the safe. A fire which burned the town hall in 1882 burned some records and files, and the records in the safe were badly injured in their bindings and somewhat defaced by water. The very oldest of these need renovating and the later volumes need new covers. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1881, the term of the present clerk. The assessors' records prior to 1881 were burned. The collectors' records for most of the years since 1840 are in possession of the town. The clerk had just been elected when the fire took place in 1882, and is consequently unable to tell what records and files were burned. The volume of proprietors' records called "Records of the Proprietors of the Lands of the Tenants of Hopkinton and Upton," from 1745 to 1825, which was supposed to be at East Cambridge, is and has been in Hopkinton.

HUBBARDSTON (Aug. 20, 1891). Brick public library building, used also for a post-office, store, express office, etc., the town offices being in the basement. The clerk has a very small safe belonging to the town in his store in this building, in which all his current records are kept; an old safe in the basement contains all the other records. Four volumes of town proceedings need binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been kept up very fully.

HYDE PARK (May 1, 1891). The town office is in a brick business block. There is a good vault, built independently of the building, which joins it in the rear, and in it the records of all departments are kept at all times. The records are all in excellent condition. The collectors' records are all in possession of the

town. A large map of the town, and some sixty plates about three by six feet, giving the streets with grades, etc., are in the vault, and there is a large volume giving a survey of every lot in town.

LAKEVILLE (July 6, 1891). Wooden town hall, with an old safe of doubtful value, which contains old miscellaneous records and papers. The clerk has a good safe belonging to the town in his house, where his records are kept. There are many old papers in confusion in the town hall. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. An attempt has been made to obtain the collectors' records, but only about two-thirds of them have been found. The rebellion record is partially written up.

LEVERETT (July 15, 1890). Wooden town hall. The clerk has a safe in his shed, in which he keeps his records, which are all in good condition. The collectors' records are all in his possession. The selectmen's records are in possession of the board, not in safes; and the assessors' records are at the town hall, not in a safe. A new safe or vault is under consideration. Marriage certificates and burial returns have not been preserved with any regularity.

LYNN (May 20, 1891). Brick city hall, upon which extensive improvements have just been made, giving several new vaults with thirty-inch walls with air spaces. Plans are being considered for still further improvements, which will make the old vaults unusually safe. The city clerk has a vault in which all his records are kept, and will transfer them to one of the new vaults as soon as it is dry. His records are in good condition. The earliest records, made in diminutive books, have been substantially bound and lettered. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for many years. The treasurer and collector has all his records in a vault, and will transfer them to a new one soon. The collectors' records since 1860 are in his possession, but earlier ones were probably burned. The auditor uses the vault in the treasurer's office. The assessors have a vault in their office and another on the floor above. Their records are continuous from 1850, and there are occasional volumes between 1793 and 1812; the missing ones were probably burned. The records of the school committee, overseers of the poor, and water board, have not been in safes, but they will all be placed in vaults when the improvements are completed. The board of health will also use one. The city engineer has stored his plans in the vaults of the other departments.

MANSFIELD (June 3, 1891). Wooden town hall. There is a large vault, where the valuation books and all the original records of which copies have been made are kept. The town has a large safe in the clerk's store, where the current records and the copies of the older records are kept. Type-written copies of the first volume of marriages, and the first of births, marriages, and deaths, have been made, and the first volume of town proceedings has been copied by hand; no copies, however, have been certified. The records which had become worn have been renovated and rebound. Marriage certificates from 1887, and a few for some years previous, and burial returns from 1872, have been preserved. The collectors' records are not in possession of the town. Assessors' lists from 1826 to 1866 were found, at the time of my visit, among papers considered valueless, and put into the safe.

MARSHFIELD (Sept. 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, not used for town offices. The selectmen have an office at the poor farm, where there is an old safe in which the more recent records are kept. The clerk has a good safe belonging to the town in his store, where all his records are kept, but it is now full. The first volume of town records is in tatters and the second is in bad condition. The proprietors' records have been recently returned to the clerk, but many leaves have been torn out and they are in bad condition. The original plan of proprietors' lands, on parchment, has also been returned to him. The other records are in good condition. The first volume has been copied but not certified. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has not been written up. The clerk has a large accumulation of old papers in his dwelling, not in a safe.

MASHPEE (June 10, 1891). No town building. There is a large safe in the town clerk's house, purchased from the town of Sandwich in 1889, in which all the town records are kept. They are in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved during the term of the present clerk, since 1883. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

MEDFIELD (Oct. 15, 1891). Brick town hall, let in part for business purposes, containing a town office. There is a very small vault where the records are kept, except a few books in current use, which are in a safe at the clerk's house. The first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, and an old volume which is evidently an

ancient copy, are in very bad order and need renovating; these have all been copied, however, except the first volume and the copy referred to. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1885, the term of the present clerk. The assessors' records since 1829 are bound, and none earlier are known to exist. The fire which destroyed the town hall probably destroyed all files of papers. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been written up in a blotter, but not in the bound volume.

MEDFORD (Oct. 10, 1891). Wooden town hall, the lower floor of which is occupied by various town offices. The clerk is also treasurer and clerk of the selectmen, and has two safes for his especial use. There is an enormous safe built into the building, used for the overflow of records from different departments; and also a small vault with single doors, containing plans and the oldest valuation lists. The first volume of town proceedings is fragile, and the third, and the first of births, marriages, and deaths, need binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1865, and there are some scattering ones earlier. The assessors use the large safe and vault. Their records are bound separately from 1793, and the valuation lists are included in the general records from 1684 to that time. The collector and water board have safes for their records. The collectors' records have been returned to the town since 1887, and there are scattering volumes for years prior to 1878, some as early as 1846, in its possession. The board of health has no safe. All records and papers, with the exception of the old volumes of collectors' records, and some files, are in one or the other of the safes or vaults.

MELROSE (June 4, 1891). Brick town hall, with a good vault, occupied in part by the savings bank, in which the assessors' older records are kept. A large safe is used by the collector and for the assessors' later books. Another large safe in the selectmen's room contains their records and those of the auditor and board of health. The water commissioners also have a good safe for their records. The clerk has a safe belonging to the town and one of his own in his apothecary store, in one or the other of which all his records are kept. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1870. The collectors' records for a few years prior to 1870 were burned, and all others that could be obtained are in possession of the town. All files and selectmen's records to 1870 were burned.

MERRIMAC (May 18, 1891). Brick town hall, occupied in part for business purposes. There is a good vault, small, however, and more room is needed. The records are kept there, with the exception of a few which the clerk keeps in his own safe for want of room. Most of the collectors' records are in the town's possession, and all could be obtained. Marriage certificates have been preserved for a number of years, but the burial returns have been preserved for the current year only. The town has a map of the town and also of the several villages, giving the lay-out of highways.

METHUEN (May 28, 1891). Brick town building, in which the clerk and selectmen have an office, open during business hours. A large vault is attached to the building, and in it the clerk, who is also the treasurer and collector, keeps all the records. The first and second volumes of records of town proceedings are in bad condition and need binding. The first has been copied, though not certified. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1859. The collectors' records from about 1850 are in possession of the town. The assessors' lists are complete. The rebellion record has been written up. There is a chest containing old highway lists, etc., etc.

MIDDLEBOROUGH (July 6, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a large vault, used also by the savings bank, in which all the records are kept, with the exception of those of the water commissioners, which are in a safe of their own. There is a safe also within the vault. Two volumes of proprietors' records are in bad condition and need repairing and binding. Some of the oldest records are supposed to be in private possession, and some later volumes have been rebound. There is a volume bearing this title page: "At a town meeting held April 12, 1858, it was voted to choose a committee of one to copy the records now in the hands of Seth Miller, secretary, for the benefit of the town . . . In accordance with the above vote the following 260 pages have been copied from the original at the house of Seth Miller, secretary, he refusing to permit them to leave his hands. Of their authenticity and value there can be no doubt, they having descended to him from Jacob Thompson, the last-named clerk in these records." The ancient records of the assessors are supposed to have been destroyed; the collectors' records, however, are in the town's possession.

MIDDLETON (Oct. 8, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a large safe used by the clerk, selectmen, and assessors, in which all the records are kept, except part of the assessors', which are in another

safe, together with the files of papers belonging to the clerk. All the records are in good order, the first two volumes, which were dilapidated, having recently been rebound. The assessors' records date from 1730. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1864. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town, although the clerk has been able to obtain a few. The rebellion record has been written up. There is an old chest containing old papers, mostly unimportant.

MILLIS (July 13, 1891). A memorial building, presented by the heirs of the late Lansing Millis, is by an arrangement between the railroad and the town used as a railroad station, town office, and public library. There is one good safe for the exclusive use of the clerk, which is, however, full, and another for the use of the assessors. The records are in good condition. The marriage certificates have all been preserved. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The records of the church are kept in the town safe for safety.

NAHANT (Oct. 3, 1891). Wooden town hall, where the town office is located. There is a safe used by all the town officers, which is too full for orderly arrangement. The clerk is obliged to keep his files of town plans and other important papers at his house, not in a safe. All of the assessors' records, with the exception of those for the last four years, are in a closet, unprotected from fire. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since the incorporation of the town. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

NEW BRAintree (Aug. 19, 1891). No town hall, the basement of the church being used as such. There is a large safe there, comparatively new, which contains the selectmen's and assessors' records, including valuation lists, which are nearly complete from 1795, with some occasional ones as early as 1773. All previous to 1795 are in pamphlets. The clerk has a town safe in his store, in which his records are kept. The first volume of town proceedings has been rebound, and such of the first part as was in bad condition has been copied. The other records are in good condition. Marriage certificates have all been preserved since 1887, and others irregularly for about twenty-five years. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

NORFOLK (June 6, 1891). Wooden town hall. The clerk has a good safe at his house, where the current records are kept. There is one very large safe, comparatively new, in the town hall, in which all the records of the selectmen and assessors are kept.

A small safe also is here, where the clerk keeps a part of his records and papers. The records are all in good condition, and the papers and files are well kept. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1807. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

NORTHAMPTON (Nov. 19, 1891). Brick city hall, with a vault built in 1889, which was worthless owing to its having a single door, but to which new double doors have been added during the year, making it fire-proof. The clerk's records and those of the assessors, except for a few of the latest years, which are in this office, not in a safe, are in this vault. The files belonging to the clerk's department are not protected from fire. The older volumes are in fair condition, and the copying of such as required it has been commenced. No births, marriages, and deaths had been indexed until 1884, since which time those from 1863 to date have been. All volumes are now being properly labelled. No assessors' records earlier than 1820 are known to exist. The treasurer and collector have one safe for their use; their files are not in a safe. The collectors' records have been returned for about seven years, but the city council has recently voted to obtain earlier ones for many years, if possible. The overseers of the poor have no safe or vault for their records. The water commissioners have a safe where most of their records are kept. The city engineer has plans either in his own office outside the city hall or in the clerk's, not in the vault. The school committee have an office in a business block, but have no safe.

NORTH ANDOVER (May 28, 1891). The town hall is used for school purposes. The selectmen have an office in an old engine-house, the second floor of which is used for a public library. There is a large safe there, containing all the selectmen's and assessors' records. A vault was built at the poor farm about ten years ago, but it is not used, owing to dampness and its inaccessibility, except for the overflow of books and papers. The town clerk has a town safe in his office in a brick building used for stores, hall, etc. His records are kept in this, but it is insufficient for the storage of the files of papers, etc. There are several volumes of copies of the records of Andover from 1709, in a crude form, and said to be inaccurate. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1890. The collectors' records are not in possession of the town, and no papers of any kind were transmitted to the present clerk by his predecessor.

NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH (June 3, 1891). The town offices are in a new wooden business block. The clerk has a large new safe, in which all his records and those of the selectmen and assessors are kept. The treasurer has a new safe in the same office, and in two old ones papers are stored. The clerk's office is open in business hours. Marriage certificates have all been preserved. The town has the collectors' records, for that part of Attleborough which is now North Attleborough, from 1884, and copies of the records of highways for that part of Attleborough have been made.

NORTH READING (June 2, 1891). Wooden town hall, to which I was unable to gain access. The clerk has no safe. The records are kept in a closet in his dwelling, all in good condition. There is a safe at the town hall, which cannot be locked. None of the assessors' records are in a safe.

NORTON (June 3, 1891). Wooden town hall, to which I was unable to gain access. The clerk has a safe in his dwelling, where his records are kept. The earliest volume of births, marriages, and deaths, with the index in a separate volume, which were badly worn, have been rebound and renovated. The clerk has made type-written copies of them also. One volume of the town proceedings has been rebound. One volume of intentions of marriage is in rather bad order; the records otherwise are in good condition. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1887. The rebellion record has been written up.

NORWELL (Sept. 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, but no records are kept there. The town uses a vault at the savings bank, where the clerk's records, and all records other than those kept in the safe in the selectmen's room in the poor-house, are kept. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. Such of the collectors' records as are known to be in existence have been returned to the town.

NORWOOD (Nov. 21, 1891). The town office is in a room in a wooden business block, where there are two large safes, one new within a few months, used jointly by the clerk and other town officers, which contain all the records and will soon contain all the files. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for very many years, those since 1887 having been filed. The collectors' records have been returned to the town. The clerk, as clerk of the parish, has records of Dedham South Precinct from 1730.

OAKHAM (Aug. 19, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which there is a large safe, new about two years ago, in which all the clerk's records, and the current records of the selectmen and overseers, and the records for late years of the assessors, are kept. There is a small old safe of doubtful value, containing the selectmen's older records, and those of the assessors, bound from 1815 to 1833, and in pamphlets from 1834 to 1850. Files of papers are in a case, and there is a chest of papers to which I could not gain access. The first, second, and third volumes of town proceedings need binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1889. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

OXFORD (July 8, 1891). Brick town hall, used for town offices and a library. There is a large new safe used exclusively by the clerk, containing all his records and earlier ones of which he has taken custody, and most of the records of the collectors from 1854. There is also a large vault containing old records and papers. The selectmen have a safe also for all their records. The valuation lists from 1808 to 1824, and from 1840 to date, are bound; those from 1824 to 1839 are in pamphlets; and most, if not all, of the earlier ones are packed away. Three volumes of the town records, and one of births, marriages, and deaths, are in a dilapidated condition; the other records are in excellent condition. All books and papers, even the very oldest, are labelled and filed in a systematic manner. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for very many years. The births, marriages, and deaths, from the earliest volume to about 1840, have been copied and indexed.

PAXTON (Aug. 11, 1891). Wooden town hall, containing an old safe used by the clerk only. The assessors' records are in a closet on the top of the safe. The selectmen's papers are in a closet in the room used by them for an office. The first volume of town proceedings, and the first and second of births, marriages, and deaths, are in bad order and need binding. A copy has been made of the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, and of such as were contained in the first volume of town proceedings. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for ten years. The collectors' records have not been returned, but the clerk happens to have those for about eighteen of the past years.

PEABODY (May 22, 1891). Fine brick town hall. The town has anticipated its growth, and built four of the finest vaults that I have seen, one of which is used by the clerk and treasurer, one

by the water board, one for the public documents, law reports, and files of papers, leaving one for miscellaneous matter. All the records of the clerk, selectmen, assessors, and collector, are kept in the vault in the clerk's room. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since the establishment of the town. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town, but the record of payment and abatement has *always* been made on the assessors' books.

PEMBROKE (Sept. 21, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which there is a safe containing many records of the assessors. A large part of those, however, are in a closet in a hall where there are also two chests containing the usual files of papers. The earliest assessors' lists cannot be found. The clerk has a large new town safe in his store, in which all his records are kept, but it is full. The first volume of town records is in a dilapidated condition; other records have been carefully repaired and renovated, gratuitously, by the present clerk. Marriage certificates and burial returns have all been preserved since 1887, and occasional ones from 1884; those since 1887 have been arranged in book form in an original manner worth imitating. The records are in most systematic order, and show evidence of much labor on the part of the clerk. The rebellion record has been written up. The collectors' records have not all been returned to the town.

PLYMOUTH (Dec. 8, 1891). No town hall. The town offices are in a wooden building used for that purpose and by the hook and ladder company. A vault on the lower floor is used by the clerk (who is also treasurer) and by all the other officers except the assessors. There is a vault on the second floor where their records are kept. The records are all in good condition, the very oldest, including the proprietors' records, having been interleaved and rebound. The clerk keeps office hours. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1878, the term of the present clerk. He has indexed the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths. In the assessors' vault there is a large accumulation of the old valuation lists and many miscellaneous books and papers, the vault being used for the overflow from the other vault. There is a large chest filled with old papers supposed to be mostly unimportant. The collectors' records have been returned to the town for a great many years. The records to 1705 have been printed, and a second volume is to be printed.

PLYMPTON (Sept. 17, 1891). Wooden town hall. There is a safe, rather old, located upon the second floor, which contains the

clerk's records. The records of the selectmen are at the house of the chairman, not in a safe. A few of the later valuation books are in the closet of a room used by the selectmen as their office, and also as a school-room. In a room on the lower floor there are closets containing many old records. The records are generally in good condition. The births, marriages, and deaths, commencing with those in the first volume, are being copied. In 1839 the town clerk, by order of the town, put all the assessors' lists and miscellaneous papers in order, and made a catalogue of all the books and papers belonging to the town. Among these lists are all from 1783 to 1831, excepting 1786, 1787, 1790, 1792, 1795, 1800, 1802, and 1824. There is a mass of old papers in the closet. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for many years, but are among the unsorted papers. Some from 1865 to 1869 were found at the time of my visit. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been written up.

PRINCETON (Aug. 20, 1891). Brick town hall, in which the selectmen have an office. The Goodnow Memorial Building, which is the property of the town, has a good vault, but it has been too damp for use until recently. This contains the records of the assessors from 1794, and all the files from 1820 to 1885. These have been arranged, and the clerk has been at work on later ones, which will be kept in the vault. The clerk has an old safe of doubtful value, belonging to the town, in his dwelling, in which his records are kept. Many important plans are unprotected. The records are all in excellent condition, many having been rebound. The certificates of marriage and burial returns have been preserved for a great many years. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

QUINCY (May 15, 1891). Stone city hall. The city clerk has a large safe, now full, in which his records are kept; they are all in good condition. The assessors have a large safe containing their records from 1861. There is a good vault used for the storage of the older records, in which the assessors' records from 1792 (the date of the setting off of the town) to 1860 are kept. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved only since the town became a city, in 1889. An effort has been made to collect all the records of the collectors, and all that could be found are in possession of the town. There are several large volumes in which many ancient original documents have been pasted for preservation.

RAYNHAM (Sept. 15, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a vault built in 1890, not yet sufficiently dry for occupancy, although the public documents have been stored there. The clerk has a small safe belonging to the town in his dwelling, where his records are kept. This is full, however, and some are left out. The earliest assessors' records are in the clerk's house, not in a safe, the later ones being with the chairman of the board, not in a safe. These will be placed in the vault as soon as it is dry. The records are in good condition. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records for 1850 and several years following were burned in the collector's house. No older ones have been returned, but the town has voted that all since shall be. The rebellion record has been written up in the blotter, but not in the bound volume.

READING (Nov. 27, 1891). No town hall. The town offices are in a brick building, built for an engine house, and for them. There is a good safe, used by the clerk, selectmen, and treasurer, for the later records and copies of the earlier. An unusually large vault contains all the ancient records, files, and papers of all departments. Many of the oldest volumes are in very bad order, and need renovating and binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have all been preserved since 1887, and very many of those before from about 1876. The collectors' records are now returned to the town annually, and the older ones from about 1864 are also in its possession. The files of papers are very ancient; but, as the officers of all departments have access to the safe, and the greater part of the printed documents are kept in it, it makes methodical arrangement by the clerk impossible.

REHOBOTH (June 8, 1891). No town office. The clerk has a very small old safe in his dwelling, where the original ancient records are kept. All copies and recent records are in a book-case in his house. Many of the old volumes are in a dilapidated condition and need binding; several have, however, been copied and certified. The selectmen's and assessors' records are at the town farm, not in a safe. The remnants of three or four books of intentions of marriage, some bearing date as early as 1720, were found among books and papers boxed up in the attic of the clerk's house, there being no place provided for the keeping of town books. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1890. No information could be obtained in regard to collectors' records or dates of those of the assessors.

REVERE (July 20, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the clerk has an office with a small safe for the current records. A new vault built in the basement last year is used for the storage of the older records of all departments. The selectmen have a large new safe and the assessors have a safe also. All the records, plans, etc., are kept in one or the other. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for many years. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. There is a large plan of the town, kept in the vault, from which sectional blue prints are annually made for the use of the assessors.

ROCKLAND (July 9, 1891). The town office was burned July 16, 1890. The backs of the volumes of records in the clerk's safe were burned, but the records were not injured, and have since been rebound. The collectors' records were not in the safe, and, being overlooked, were destroyed. All the other records were removed from the building. The marriage certificates and burial returns, and some of the unimportant papers, were burned. The town office is now in a wooden business block, where there are three large safes, — one for the clerk, one for the selectmen, and one for the assessors. All the records are kept there, with the exception of a few current ones which are in the safe in the clerk's office in the savings bank. The records are in good condition. A type-written copy of the births, marriages, and deaths, from 1712 to 1874, in the Abington records, has been made, and a copy of the town meeting records from 1712 to 1820 is being made. The town has a file of the "Rockland Standard," from 1874, the date of the incorporation of the town.

SALEM (June 16, 1891). Brick and stone city hall, particularly exposed to fire by the proximity of a large wooden stable and other old wooden buildings. The city clerk has a vault which was rebuilt in 1876 and made fire-proof, and which has lately been enlarged. All his records are kept here. The records are all in good condition, the older ones having been repaired. All births, marriages, and deaths, and marriage intentions, have been indexed and chronologically arranged, and the indexing of all records is in progress. The files of papers which have accumulated since Salem became a city are numbered and indexed, and all town papers which have been preserved have been arranged and are being indexed. Births for nearly two years, in 1857, 1858, and 1859, were not recorded at the time, but have been by the present clerk. All plans of highways and sewers are in the clerk's care,

and these are numbered and indexed. Certificates of marriage have been preserved since 1856, and there are some prior to 1832. Burial returns since 1861, and birth returns since 1880, are preserved. A large vault has been built in the basement within a year, which is used by the departments for the records and papers least in use. The assessors have a safe in which the records for a few of the latest years are kept, the others being in vaults. The collector and treasurer uses two safes and a vault on the first floor for the later records, the earlier being in the storage vault. The collectors' records have been returned to the town and city, as a rule, and nearly all, if not all, are in possession of the city. The school committee have all their records in vaults; the current records are in the vault on the first floor, the older being in the storage vault. The board of health has a vault in which all records are kept. The overseers of the poor have a safe in which the current records are kept, the older ones being in the storage vault. Some twenty volumes of records of various kinds, with files of papers, are in a book-case in the office. The water board has a safe for their current records, the older being in the storage vault.

SAUGUS (May 20, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a vault in which the clerk's, selectmen's and assessors' records are kept, all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records have not been returned except for a very few years, and only those for a few years just previous can probably be obtained.

SCITUATE (Sept. 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, a long distance from the clerk's house, to which access could not be gained. It was reported that there were several safes there, but the clerk has not access to them, and I could obtain no information in regard to their contents. The clerk has a small old safe in his dwelling at Scituate Harbor, so full as to injure the records, and some are kept outside for want of room. Most of the early records have been rebound, evidently many years ago, and are generally in good condition. Several of these volumes contain records of the earliest laying out of all the lands, and are most important; one of these is badly dilapidated and needs binding. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887, and there are others older, but for want of room they cannot be arranged conveniently for examination. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. A copy of the laws passed at the session of the first General Court at New Plymouth was found outside of the safe.

SEEKONK (June 8, 1891). A very small wooden building, containing one room, is used as a town office. A very small safe, probably sufficiently fire-proof in its location, but very old, is full, though containing but a part of the records. The remainder of the clerk's records are upon shelves in the building. The records are in fairly good condition, the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, having been rebound. The selectmen's and assessors' records are kept at the town farm, two miles distant, not in a safe; access to these could not be gained. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1885. The rebellion record is not written up, but most of the information seemed to be contained in a book called "Waste Book." Many of the old records had been in a garret previous to the present clerk's term of office, and many pages of the records of births, marriages, and deaths, are known to be missing.

SHARON (Oct. 7, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the town offices are located. There is a good brick vault, in which the safe owned before the vault was built has been placed. The clerk's records are kept in the safe. The selectmen and assessors have their records in the vault, with the exception of a large number of pamphlet lists which were found in the attic, partly in a chest and partly in a pile of old printed reports. Tax lists from 1740 to 1839 have been copied in three large volumes. Marriage certificates and burial returns have usually been preserved since 1865; those from 1865 to 1880 were in the chest above mentioned. Many files of papers were in bureau drawers in the town office. The records were in good condition, the earliest volumes having been repaired by the clerk. A large accumulation of books, papers, plans, etc., are in the vault, lacking in arrangement. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

SHERBORN (July 15, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the selectmen have an office. There is an old safe there, containing miscellaneous papers. There is a large safe at the clerk's house, new in 1885, in which all his records as clerk and treasurer are kept. This is full. Ten of the oldest volumes of proprietors' records, and records of town proceedings, are in bad order and need binding. The assessors' records from 1827 to 1879 are in a trunk in the attic of the clerk's house, the later ones being at the house of the chairman of the board of assessors, not in a safe. The collectors' records from 1860, with a few exceptions, are in the town's possession and in the clerk's safe. All marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved during the term of

office of the present clerk, and there are others for very many years. Miscellaneous papers, some of which bear date as early as 1704, are filed, and sorted in packages in the Sawin Academy and Dowse High School building. Copies of such records as have been made have been certified.

SHIRLEY (Nov. 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a fine large vault and a large old safe not now used. All the records and files are kept in the vault. The first volume of town proceedings, a very small book, is in bad condition. What purports to be a copy of this has been made, but the clerk at the time of the copying made the endorsement in the volume that the copyist had used his own language in the copy. The other records are in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for about twenty years. The valuation lists, bound from 1820 to 1824, in paper covers from 1825 to 1840, and bound from 1841 to date, are in the vault, and there are many ancient valuation lists in files. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. The rebellion record has been written up.

SOMERSET (Sept. 24, 1891). Two wooden town halls, neither of which are used for offices or the deposit of records. The town office is in a small building used exclusively as such, where there are three safes, two used by the clerk only, and one by him and the selectmen. The assessors' records are in boxes, unprotected. The first volume of proprietors' records, and the first of births, marriages, and deaths, need binding. The others are in good condition. About one-third of the files are unprotected, there not being room in the safes for them. Marriage certificates from 1840, death returns from 1861, and burial returns from 1859, have been preserved and filed. Part of the collectors' records from 1840 have been returned to the town, those for some of the years having been burned. The rebellion record has been written up. The office is in most excellent order. The previous clerk searched the town for records and files, and the present clerk has continued the search, until all the records that can be obtained are in the custody of the town.

SOMERVILLE (Sept. 30, 1891). Brick city hall, with a good vault for the clerk's use, where all his records are kept, in good order. The assessors have a vault in which all their records are kept. The collector and treasurer also has a vault. The auditor, who is also clerk of the common council, has a safe, and the city engineer a vault for plans. The water board, school committee, and

overseers of the poor, have offices outside the city hall, and all have new safes. All records are now in vaults or safes. Marriage certificates and burial returns have mostly been preserved since 1842. The rebellion record has not been written up. The collectors' records since 1856, with the exception of 1857, have been returned to the city.

SPRINGFIELD (Nov. 19, 1891). Brick city hall. The city clerk has a safe, built in 1888, of unusually heavy construction; this is used by the clerk only, and contains all of the records and most of the files. All the earliest records were repaired, interleaved, and rebound some years ago, and the records are all in excellent condition. There are some curious ancient papers here, including grants to the residents of Longmeadow and a book for the record of lost goods, which has been in use from 1703 to date. Marriage certificates from 1849, returns of births from 1870, and deaths from 1868, have been preserved, filed, and indexed, and there are many certificates of marriage from as early a date as 1722. The assessors have a large safe in which the records for the two last years are kept, all the others being in a room unprotected from fire. There are valuation lists more or less complete, arranged in files to 1731; those from 1806 to 1824 are in pamphlets, and from 1824 in bound volumes. The treasurer has a large safe where all his records are kept. The collector has a good safe, and the records from 1844 are in possession of the city, and kept there. He has a fragmentary tax list of the plantation for the year 1685. The overseers of the poor have a large safe, new within two years, and an older one, which contain all of their records and blanks. The water commissioners, city engineer, and highway and sewer department, have offices in a brick building, with new vaults built within a year, in which all their records and plans are kept. The school committee has an office in a wooden building, where they have a new safe for their records.

STONEHAM (June 4, 1891). The town offices are in a brick business block. There is a large new safe used for records and papers of all sorts. There is an old safe also in the selectmen's office, in which part of the records are kept, but it is not sufficient for all the valuation books. The clerk has a safe of his own in his dwelling where the current records are kept. The records are all in good condition, some having recently been rebound. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for about thirty-five years. Most of them are not in a safe. The clerk has

obtained the record of thirty-one marriages by Rev. John Cairnes, not recorded in the town records, which he has copied and indexed. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town. Plans of street grades have been arranged, and are kept conveniently for reference, though not in a safe.

STOW (Oct. 28, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a large safe where the older records are kept. The clerk has a small safe in his house, new within two years, where the current records are kept. The large safe contained much printed matter and many miscellaneous articles which need not be there, while valuation lists prior to 1809 were in confusion in a closet in the gallery of the hall with a mass of printed matter. The lists from 1809, many of the earliest being in pamphlets, were in the safe. Marriage certificates have been preserved for 1890 and 1891 only. The very old volumes are in a most wretched condition, and should be renovated and bound. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town, although those for many years can be obtained. There are no indexes of births, marriages, and deaths.

SWAMPSCOTT (May 20, 1891). Wooden town hall, used for town offices and a public library, with a good vault and a large safe. The clerk's records are kept in the vault, with the exception of the current volume of records of marriages, which is in his own safe. Part of the valuation books are in the vault. The safe is used for the storage of files. The records are all in good condition. The town has a record of all tax payments and abatements, although some of the collectors' records are not in the town's possession. Marriage certificates and burial returns have not been preserved prior to 1890. The records of town proceedings have been printed annually since 1870.

SWANSEA (Sept. 24, 1891). A new stone town hall, the gift of Hon. Frank Shaw Stevens, was dedicated on the 9th of September, 1891, and the records have just been deposited in a fine vault there. The clerk has an old safe in his dwelling, where the current records will be kept. All the records and papers which have been scattered about in various places have been collected and stored in the vault; among these are the assessors' lists for 1823, and the whole or parts of those from 1831 to 1856; all since 1856 are bound. Marriage certificates and burial returns are complete since 1863, and there are some earlier. The collectors' records from that date have been returned. The first volume has had parts which were becoming illegible copied and bound in the original, and all

others of the oldest volumes have been rebound, with the exception of two small books of publishments, from 1744 to 1746, and from 1830 to 1836.

TEWKSBURY (June 2, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a good vault, although very damp from being constantly closed. The clerk has a small old safe of doubtful value in his dwelling, where current records are kept. The older records, with those of the selectmen and assessors, are in the vault. The records are in good condition except the first volume of births, marriages, and deaths, which needs binding or copying. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1887. The assessors' records from 1831 to 1860 are in pamphlets; all since are bound. The town has endeavored to obtain the collectors' records, and has them from 1855 to 1864, except 1856 and 1860, 1870 to 1873, and 1876 to date. The rebellion record has been written up.

TOWNSEND (Oct. 30, 1891). No town hall. There is a brick engine-house in which the selectmen have their room. There is a safe there, to which I could not gain access, which contains the later records. Another safe is on the lower floor of the building, and contains the oldest records, including valuation lists bound and unbound from 1789 and possibly earlier. The clerk has the use of a storage vault in the National Bank building, where current records are kept. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1885, and are filed. All the ancient papers have been bundled up, labelled, and packed in chests. A few of the later assessors' books are not in the safe.

WAKEFIELD (June 6, 1891). Brick town hall, with two rather small vaults, in one of which the clerk keeps his records, the other being used by the treasurer and assessors. An old safe considered of but little value is used for old papers. Two of the older volumes of town records need binding. Some volumes of births, marriages, and deaths, have been rebound. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1872, and there are a few for occasional years before. The collectors' records from 1857 are in possession of the town.

WALTHAM (Oct. 5, 1891). The city offices are in a wooden building, owned by the city but let for business purposes. The clerk has a vault in his office on the second floor where his current records are kept, and there is a vault on the lower floor used for

the overflow from all departments. The records are all in good condition, some of the older having been rebound. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since about 1880. The assessors have a vault on the second floor where their later records are kept, and also valuation lists from 1738 to 1762, which are in sheets unbound; their other records are in the storage vault. The auditor uses the clerk's vault. The treasurer and collector has a safe, and uses the storage vault for the older records. The collectors' records from 1852 to 1864, and from the time of incorporation as a city in 1884, are in possession of the city. The city engineer has a vault on the third floor where his plans are kept. The street commissioners and overseers of the poor have offices in this building, but have no safes. The water board and school committee have offices outside the building. The water board has a safe, but not sufficiently large to contain plans. The school committee have none.

WATERTOWN (Oct. 5, 1891). Wooden town hall, with two good vaults each containing a large safe, in one of which the clerk keeps most of his records. All of the other records are kept in one or the other of the vaults. All of the old records appear to have been rebound in 1829, but the leaves of some are in bad order and the volumes should be bound again. There is an unusual quantity of files of old papers, dating from 1740, which have been carefully arranged; many of these, however, are in cases. The plans, etc., are all in the vault. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for very many years. The collectors' records have been returned for the years 1854, 1858, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1864, 1869, and 1872 to date. The assessors' lists from 1759 to 1790 are in files, and from 1790 to date in volumes.

WEBSTER (July 8, 1891). Brick building, used for town offices, and an engine-house and lockup, but not as a town hall. There is a large vault, built within a year, which is being dried out for the town clerk's use; another smaller one in another room for the assessors' use, in which their records and the clerk's are now kept; and a good safe in which the selectmen's records are kept. The clerk keeps office hours, is clerk of the board of selectmen, and the records and papers are in excellent order and condition. The assessors' records are preserved from 1841. The collectors' records since 1851 are in possession of the town. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1886, and there are some earlier. The clerk has a bound file of the "Webster Times" from March 11, 1859, which is kept in the vault.

WESTBOROUGH (July 7, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which the selectmen and assessors have a room. There is a brick vault containing all the records except the current, which the clerk keeps in his own safe in his store, and those of the water commissioners, which are in a room in a business block, not in a safe. The assessors' records from 1811 are in good order; the earlier ones are missing. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1886; also some prior to 1800, and probably most of them from 1823 to 1843, and from 1850 to 1861. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

WEST NEWBURY (May 18, 1891). Wooden town hall, in which there is a large safe used principally for assessors' records. There is a safe at the poor farm also, in which the selectmen keep their records, and the town clerk has a safe at his house in which his records are kept. The records are all in good condition. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887.

WESTPORT (June 1, 1891). Wooden town hall, with an iron vault brought from the burnt city hall in Fall River. The clerk has a safe in his dwelling, where his records are kept; all others have just been brought from various places and are kept in the vault. Three old volumes need rebinding. Marriage certificates from about 1865, and burial returns from 1887, with a few of each for occasional years earlier, have been preserved. The collectors' records have been called for by the town, and those from 1850 to 1855, 1862, 1863, and 1868 to 1883, are in the possession of the town, and a few others can be obtained. The assessors' lists from 1824 to 1842 are in pamphlets; all since are bound. The rebellion record has been written up.

WILMINGTON (June 2, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a safe which is full, in which the selectmen's and assessors' records are kept. The clerk has a small safe belonging to the town in the L of his house, in which he keeps all his records; this is full. He had no safe until this spring. The first and second volumes of records of town proceedings, the first of births, marriages, and deaths, and the assessors' records from 1730 to 1750, are almost in tatters. The records from 1762 to 1786, which were supposed to be lost, were found in one of the dilapidated volumes at the time of my visit. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved since 1887. The collectors' records are not in possession of the town, although those for thirty years could easily be obtained if the law required it. Found the usual chest of old highway lists, bills, etc.

WINTHROP (July 23, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a room used for a town office. The clerk has a very small worthless safe, which is filled with papers and records. He is obliged to keep a few records at his house, not in a safe. The selectmen have a small safe, which would probably be valueless in its position. The records of their meetings are kept by the clerk of the board, not in a safe. The assessors have no safe, their later records being at the house of their clerk, and the older ones in the closet of the town hall. A large book of plans, recently made at the cost of three hundred dollars, is not in the safe. Marriage certificates and burial returns have been preserved for about ten years. The collectors' records are not in possession of the town.

WOBURN (Oct. 12, 1891). Wooden city hall. The clerk has a large safe in his office on the second floor where the current records are kept, and a vault on the lower used for the overflow of his and of the other departments. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1860; burial returns since 1854. The clerk has sorted all the old files and arranged them. He has collected also the tax lists from 1779 to 1815, and they are now complete from the first date, and are bound. The assessors have a vault, and all the records are kept there or in the overflow vault. The registers of voters also use this. The treasurer and collector each have a safe. The water board has a safe. By a vote of the town all plans are placed in the public library, where they are arranged and indexed.

WORCESTER (July 8, 1891). Brick city hall, part of the basement of which is let for business purposes. The clerk has a safe for the current records, and a vault greatly crowded where his records are kept, and for all the older records, whether belonging to his department or not. With the exception of a volume of proprietors' records, the records and papers are all in good condition, the volumes having been bound as necessity required. Marriage certificates have been preserved and filed since 1850, burial returns since 1861. The assessors have a room on the second floor where their records are kept in cases, with the exception of the valuation list for the current year, which is in a very old safe, probably worthless in its situation. The treasurer and collector has a good vault, sufficient for all records considered important. He has the collectors' records since 1865 in his possession, there being earlier ones in the city clerk's vault. The auditor has a safe in which all his record books are kept. The overseers of the poor have no provision for the safety of their important records, which

are kept upon shelves. The city engineer has a vault in the basement and a safe in his office, in one or the other of which all plans and records are kept. The water commissioners have an old safe containing part of their records; but it is not considered safe, and a new one has been ordered, which, however, will be sufficient for but part of their records. The board of health has an office in the basement, but access to it could not be obtained.

WRENTHAM (July 14, 1891). Wooden town hall, with a good vault. There is a large town safe in the clerk's store, in which all his records are kept. The vault contains all the records of the assessors, including bound valuation lists from 1818, and unbound lists from 1768. The selectmen's records from 1818 are also there. There is the usual chest, kept in the vault, which contains many old papers which have been filed and arranged by some previous clerk or clerks. The first volume of town records appears to be missing, but there is a copy. Three volumes of the proprietors' records and those of town proceedings need binding. Marriage certificates have been preserved since 1880, and among the papers in the chest are some as old as 1868. The collectors' records have not been returned to the town.

ASSESSORS' RECORDS.

The same neglect of the assessors' records has been found during the year as in the cities and towns previously visited. Prior to about 1825 the valuation lists if preserved are usually in files or in very small pamphlets; from that time until about 1860 they are in larger books, but usually unbound; and from about 1860 in the cumbersome form furnished by the Commonwealth. Under the provisions of chapter 307 of the Acts of 1888, the chairman is given the custody of the records, and often keeps them at his house, not in a safe. If the town possesses a vault, the volumes are returned to it at the convenience of the assessors. Few towns have safes large enough for many, if any, of the large valuation books now in use; and the result is that those from 1860 are piled up in some out-of-the-way places wholly unprotected from fire. The earlier lists and pamphlets are in chests or any convenient receptacle for useless matter. These are a most important record in determining the settlement of paupers, secondary only to the collectors' records;

and, as it is the exception rather than the rule where the collectors' records are in town custody, they become of first importance.

COLLECTORS' RECORDS.

I would call attention to what was said in the second and third reports in regard to the records of the collectors, and say that in every city and town visited the necessity of the return to the town of such of these records as are in existence is fully realized by the city or town officers. I would, therefore, again most strongly urge the passage of the following bill. But one objection to a similar bill proposed last year has ever been presented to me, and that is met in this draft by allowing a collector to retain his warrant, which would enable him to collect any unpaid tax after his records were in the town custody.

AN ACT IN RELATION TO THE ACCOUNTS AND RECORDS OF COLLECTORS OF TAXES.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. Every collector of taxes who resigns his office, or is removed or retired from office, shall within three months after such resignation, removal, or retirement, deposit all his accounts, records, and papers relating to the assessment and collection of taxes in the city or town in which he held such office, excepting his warrant, with the clerk of such city or town.

SECT. 2. Every ex-collector of taxes shall, within three months after the passage of this act, deposit all the accounts, records, and papers which are now in his possession relating to the assessment and collection of taxes in the town in which he held such office, excepting his warrant, with the clerk of said city or town.

SECT. 3. The executor or administrator of a deceased person who at the time of his death or previously thereto was a collector of taxes, shall within three months after his acceptance of the office of administrator deposit all the accounts, records, and papers which came into his hands relating to the assessment and collection of taxes, with the clerk of such city or town.

SECT. 4. When all the taxes committed to the collector of taxes in any city or town have been paid or abated, or in any event at the end of three years from the date of the commitment to him of said taxes, he shall deposit all the accounts, records, and papers relating to such taxes, with the clerk of the city or town in which he holds office.

SECT. 5. If the collector of taxes in any city or town has an office for the deposit of records and the transaction of the business of collector, the accounts, records, and papers required to be deposited with the city or town clerk shall be deposited with the collector in said office.

SECT. 6. Any city or town clerk, or collector of taxes mentioned in section 5 of this act, who shall have knowledge of any accounts, records, or papers relating to taxes in his city or town which under the provisions of this act should be in his possession, shall demand the same of any person having them in his possession.

SECT. 7. Any collector or ex-collector of taxes, or any executor or administrator mentioned in section 3 of this act who refuses or neglects to perform any duty required by this chapter, or any person having in his possession any accounts, records, or papers mentioned in section 6 of this act, who, after demand made by the clerk or collector entitled by law to have possession of the same, wrongfully detains them, shall forfeit a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars.

Information has been obtained when possible in regard to the collectors' records in most of the cities and towns, and is presented in the report upon each.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, AND DEATHS.

I would strongly urge that the records of births, marriages, and deaths, receive greater attention. Their importance can be fully appreciated only when the errors or omissions in them are discovered.

Physicians or midwives are required on or before the fifth day of each month to report to the clerk of each city or town a correct list of all children born therein during the month next preceding, at whose birth they were present, stating certain required facts. They are entitled to a fee of twenty-five cents for each birth reported, and are liable to a fine not exceeding twenty dollars for each neglect. The neglect of the physicians and midwives is so universal that the clerks depend upon the house-to-house canvass made by them, or under their direction, at the end of the year, rather than upon the required returns, for a correct record. This should not be so. A canvass made by asking whoever answers the summons at a house door is sure to be incorrect, either from

ignorance, unwillingness to answer, or desire to deceive on the part of persons answering. The birth of a person is sometimes found recorded in two places, report having been made at the time to the clerk of the town where the birth occurred, and afterward to a canvasser in the town where the family had its usual abode. Illegitimate births are sure to be concealed from a canvasser. This is becoming a serious matter to the State, upon whom the support of many of the illegimates devolves, as it is impossible to ascertain their birthplaces and charge their support to the cities and towns which should support them.

The marriage records are also deficient, from the failure of the ministers to make returns as required. Intentions of marriage are always recorded, and in the absence of returns these are assumed to be evidence of the marriage, though it is often a wrong assumption. At present clerks hesitate to take action in the disagreeable duty of prosecuting, although a few have threatened prosecution. One was defeated at the next election as punishment for it. The duty of prosecuting should not lie with the town clerks as long as their elections are annual.

PROPRIETORS' RECORDS.

Another year's experience makes more apparent the fact that the value of the records of the proprietors of the common lands is not appreciated. Their existence is often unknown, or, if known, and any records are to be taken out of the safe to make room for a current volume of records of mortgages, or something comparatively as unimportant, these are the ones likely to be selected. Many of the volumes are crumbling to pieces, and will be valueless in a few years; while, on the other hand, some are in excellent condition as regards legibility, and contain well-drawn plots of the lands with names of abutters. The copying of these for the registries of deeds should, as I have before stated, be made compulsory upon the part of the county commissioners.

The value put upon these records in former times may be seen by reference to the case of the Proprietors of Athol, Province Laws, Vol. IV., pp. 860-863. In 1758 the clerk of the Proprietors of Athol absconded with the records, and

June 11, 1760, the proprietors petitioned the court for "direction and relief," stating that "Thus the petitioners are deprived of their records, and those who held their several possessions, or original proprietors, or have purchased the lands of delinquent proprietors, left without their proper and needful proofs, and *are in the utmost danger of running into total confusion.*" Surveys were made and fragmentary records collected, and after five years of appeal to the court a new record book was approved and established as the record.

The records of the Proprietors of Swansea, beginning with a copy of the deed from Osamequid (Massasoit), beginning in March, 1653, and ending March 16, 1797, are in possession of the town clerk of Barrington, R. I. These should certainly be copied by the county commissioners of Bristol County.

The records of the Proprietors of the lands of the tenants of Hopkinton and Upton, from 1745 to 1825, which were incorrectly currently reported to be at the registry of deeds at East Cambridge, are and have been in the safe at Hopkinton. There are, however, in that registry nineteen volumes called "Deeds of Hopkinton and Upton," which fact is probably the foundation of the incorrect report alluded to.

SCHOOL RECORDS.

By the return made by school committees in 1890 it was shown that in two hundred and forty-three of the cities and towns the school committee records were not kept in safes. No information in regard to the matter has been obtained this year, except as I have visited the cities and towns; but I feel safe in saying that very few have made any improvement in this respect, or will until the town clerk has the care of the records.

A few of the old school district records have been found during the year, and many could be obtained if it were made the business of any one to collect them.

RECORDS OF OVERSEERS OF THE POOR.

Many complaints have reached me of the failure of overseers of the poor to keep records. The cities and towns are constantly at variance among themselves and with the

Commonwealth on the question of the settlement of paupers, and much unnecessary expense is incurred and bad feeling engendered thereby. I have been informed so many times that a board always sends a general denial of all knowledge of a person who is alleged by another town or by the Commonwealth to have obtained a settlement in their town, that it can be almost said to be the custom among the towns. The town making the allegation, or the Commonwealth, is then put to the trouble and expense of attempting to prove the case by the records in the other town, often with the result of not finding any records which will throw light upon the subject. In one town at least access to the records was refused the representative of another.

An attempt was made early in the year to ascertain how generally the law in regard to keeping of records by the overseers of the poor was violated.

Section 34 of chapter 84 of the Public Statutes provides that "Overseers of the poor shall keep full and accurate records of the paupers fully supported, the persons relieved and partially supported, and the travellers and vagrants lodged at the expense of their cities and towns, together with the amount paid for such support and relief."

Chapter 27 of the Public Statutes provides in section 69 that certain towns may elect overseers of the poor, one for one year, one for two years, and one for three years, and at any subsequent annual meeting may elect one for three years. By section 71 it is provided that such boards shall choose a secretary, and by section 72 that they "shall cause books to be kept, wherein shall be entered in a neat and methodical style, and so arranged as to be readily referred to upon said books, the information required by law in regard to all needy persons aided under their direction, and all further information as to every case of relief given, asked for, or refused, the preservation of which may be of importance to their towns or to the Commonwealth, stating the amount and kind of aid given, and the reasons for giving such aid or for refusing the same."

Although persons familiar with the business of the overseers of the poor cannot see why there should be a dis-

tion, it would seem that the boards elected annually are not required to keep the detailed record required by said section 72. As there was no information at hand concerning the manner of electing the board in the several towns, and therefore which questions would apply, the following questions were asked by circular of the chairman of the board in each town : —

1. Has your town a separate board of overseers of the poor, or do the selectmen act as such?
2. Has the board of overseers chosen a secretary?
3. Are books kept in the manner prescribed by section 72 of chapter 27 of the Public Statutes? If so, what years do they cover?
4. Are such records kept as are required by section 34 of chapter 84 of the Public Statutes? If so, what years do they cover?
5. Where are the books and records above mentioned kept, and are they in fire-proof safes?

Of the cities the following questions were asked : —

1. Are such records kept as are required by section 34 of chapter 84 of the Public Statutes? If so, what years do they cover?
2. Are there any records of the overseers of the poor covering a period when your city was a town? If so, what years do they cover?
3. Where are the above-mentioned records kept, and are they in fire-proof safes?

All but twenty-five of the cities and towns returned replies, and many members of various boards called for consultation. It soon became apparent that there had been great misunderstanding and disregard of the law in the past, and that, with a few exceptions, no records were now kept in such detail as is required, "the preservation of which may be of importance to their towns or to the Commonwealth." (The importance of these records to individuals who have pauper rights seems to have been overlooked.)

Many requests were made for forms which would meet the requirement of the law. In preparing these I asked the aid of the Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers, which

admits to membership “The secretary or agent of the board of overseers of the poor of each city of the Commonwealth, and the chairman, secretary, or agent of the like board of every town,” and one of whose purposes is “to acquire a thorough and uniform method of administration of public relief.” Forms were prepared, the “History Blank” being prepared by the association, and were approved by representatives of the State Board of Lunacy and Charity. A copy of the following circular was then sent to every city and town, enclosing blank forms of headings for books of record, and the “History Blank” in its four-page form for use.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER ON PUBLIC RECORDS
OF PARISHES, TOWNS, AND COUNTIES,

9 PARK STREET, BOSTON, April 15, 1891.

Overseers of the Poor.

GENTLEMEN :—The replies to my inquiries in regard to records kept by the overseers have shown so very many cases of neglect to keep any or sufficient records, and requests have been received from so many of the boards for forms for records, that it has led me to prepare samples which I herewith enclose.

The form which I term “History Blank” was prepared by the Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers, whose experience should certainly make them experts. These can be used separately, and filed by the secretary of the board or its agent, and a bound volume of the same blanks can be made the record. The other blanks, called “Pauper Register,” conform to the return which you are required to make to the State Board, and that has been submitted to them. A form of the register very similar to this has been prepared by one of the Boston stationers and sold for some years. The form can easily be changed to the present, and prepared by any manufacturing stationer; and the three parts called “Persons fully supported,” “Persons relieved and partially supported,” and “Travellers lodged and Persons sent to Poor Farms,” can be bound together or separately, as desired. It would seem well to have the last part bound separately and kept at the poor farm, or other places where travellers are lodged.

I enclose also a form copied with a slight change from Milford, which may be useful as a suggestion in the towns having many expenditures by the overseers. By the debit and credit table it can be seen at a glance what sums have been paid under the various classes of payments and what the balance is at the disposal of the overseers; while the consecutive numbering of the orders on

the treasurer, and on the stubs, with the entry of the number of the order in the debit and credit account, makes a check upon errors, and immediate reference, possible.

Aside from any requirement of the statute that detailed records should be kept, the importance of these in the matter of a claim for settlement, made after many years and after the circumstances have passed beyond the recollection of town officers, would seem to make the necessity apparent for these records as a matter of protection to the town from illegal claims, and a uniformity among towns would be of great help to them all.

Several requests for forms of records for the different classes of aid to soldiers and sailors have made it seem advisable to enclose forms for those also.

I trust you will adopt these forms, if you have not already a system which you deem as good if not better.

Yours respectfully,

ROBERT T. SWAN,
Commissioner.

Copies of the several forms and "History Blank" are herewith presented, necessarily reduced in size. These are presented here that they may possibly be brought to the attention of town officers who did not see the originals sent to the towns, and that members of present boards of overseers of the poor, who were not members when the originals were sent, may have the benefit of them. It happened in several instances that the circular and blanks were received by boards, or members of boards, who had just been elected at the town meetings in March or April, 1891, and who, finding no records kept by their predecessors or associates, and having the matter brought to their attention, heartily welcomed a systematic form and readily adopted it.

The forms on page 51 represent the two separate books used in Milford, the first being in regular account form, the second in the style of a check-book. The first and second forms on pages 52 and 53 extend across two pages, the details requiring more space than can be had on one. The third form occupies but a single page.

The "History Blank," so called, is a four-page sheet intended to be folded for pocket use, and subsequent filing, to be bound later as a record; or the pages can be bound, making a record book to which the facts noted by the investigator on his pocket blank can be transferred.

DEBIT.						Name.	No. of Order.
Sundries.	Insane.	Farm.	Out-Door.	Salaries and Wages.	Total.		
CREDIT.						Appropriations.	Reimburse- ments by State or Towns.
Date of Debit or Credit.							

No.
 Treasurer of the Town of
 Pay to the order of \$ Dollars,
 100
 and charge to the Department for Support of the Poor.

 Chairman of the Overseers of the Poor.

\$ No.
 Date, ...
 Payable to
 On account of

PAUPER REGISTER.
PERSONS FULLY SUPPORTED.

Registered Number.	Name.	Color.	Age.	Sex.	Birthplace.	Naturalized or not.	Place of Settlement.	Nature of Settlement.

PAUPER REGISTER.
PERSONS RELIEVED AND PARTIALLY SUPPORTED.

Registered Number.	Name.	Color.	Age.	Sex.	Birthplace.	Came into the State.	Naturalized or not.	Place of Settlement.

OVERSEERS OF THE POOR,

(Name of city or town here.)

189.....

Name?

Number in family?

Color, Sex, Age?

Place of Birth?

Residence, Street and Number?

* When and how came to State?

When to (Name of city or town here.)

Lived here since, and how long?

Residence previously?

Occupation? Wages?

Intemperate, Insane, or Infirm?

Owned real estate? Paid tax?

What, where and when?

Property or Means?

Life Insured, How much?

Ever in Army or Navy?

State Aid or Pension?

Ever before Aided, and when?

By what Town, and where residing?

Place of settlement, how settled?

* IF A FOREIGNER, ASK THESE QUESTIONS. 1. At what port did you embark?
 2. What was the name of the vessel that brought you to this country? 3. To what
 line did it belong? 4. At what port in this country did you land from the vessel?
 5. In what month and year did it arrive? 6. Whose name was written on your
 passage ticket?

Leave this Page for Binding.

HUSBAND OR WIFE.

When and where married and were
you married more than once?

Name, and age now?

Date and place of birth?

Occupation?

Residence and settlement?

Date of death, and age?

Real and Personal estate and
means?

PARENTS OF HUSBAND OR
WIFE.

CHILDREN OF APPLICANT.

Names of Children.	Age.	Date of Birth.	Place of Birth.	Occupation.	Date of Death.	Place of Death.

PARENTS OF APPLICANT.

Name and Age?

Date and place of birth?

Occupation?

Residence and settlement?

Date of death, and age?

Property and Means?

Ever in Army or Navy?

A number of the towns have already commenced the use of these uniform records, and their general use might well be required as a step toward just dealing in the pauper settlement question. Where meagre records are kept it is impossible for a stranger to them to obtain the needed information without the assistance of the person making the record, and that is often withheld. If a full record is kept it may be so different in form from that with which the searcher is familiar that it is confusing and of little value. With a prescribed uniform form the record would be what it is intended by statute to be.

The neglect of overseers of the poor to choose a secretary and keep proper records is another argument in favor of making the town clerk clerk of all boards, except in towns of sufficient size to warrant a salaried clerk of the overseers.

Requests were also made for forms for records for the different classes of aid to soldiers and sailors, and those in use in the State aid office in Boston were approved by the commissioners on State aid, and forwarded to the cities and towns. A copy of these forms is also presented on the following page. These forms run across two pages, the columns of months occupying the right-hand page.

The preparation and forwarding of these various forms for records was a departure from the line of work prescribed for this commission, which is to examine into the custody and condition of the records under its jurisdiction, and to take measures for their preservation. As many complaints had been made to me of the neglect of overseers of the poor to keep records, resulting in a money loss to other towns, and as in my examination I had found this neglect to be very general, I thought it proper, in the absence of any one authorized to make complaint, to call the attention of the several boards of overseers to the neglect. Having then received requests for suggestions and forms it seemed to present an opportunity for the commencement of a uniform system of keeping these important records, and that I should be rendering the State a service by this departure from my regular line of work. The adoption of the forms by one after another of the towns seems to prove the correctness of this view.

Town (or city) of

MILITARY AID. — Chap. 279 of Acts of 1889.

No. of Case.	Name of Volunteer.	Co.	Reg't or Vessel.	Mustered.	Discharged.	Credited to	Remarks.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

Town (or city) of

STATE AID. — Chap. 301 of Acts of 1889.

No. of Case.	Name of Volunteer.	Co.	Reg't or Vessel.	Mustered.	Names of Persons Assisted.	Relation to Volunteer.	Record of Pensions.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

Town (or city) of

SOLDIERS' RELIEF. — Chap. 447 of Acts of 1890.

No. of Case.	Name of Volunteer.	Co.	Reg't or Vessel.	Mustered.	Names of Persons Assisted.	Relation to Volunteer.	Amount Allowed.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

FILES OF PAPERS.

I have given especial attention to the matter of the files of papers in the cities and towns visited during the year. During the high price of paper in the late war many public papers were sent to the paper mills, some going directly from public offices. At that time an agent for persons in England made a tour of the towns within a radius of ten or fifteen miles of Fitchburg, and bought all the old papers which could be obtained from any source. These were carried to Fitchburg, and such as were wanted were preserved and probably sent to England; the others, which aggregated many tons, were sent to the mills.

In view of the fact that the selling of papers was so general, and that provision for the safety of the files had seldom been made, it is surprising to find in some cities and towns so many which have been preserved. Occasionally these are bundled up and labelled, and very occasionally kept in vaults; but more often they are in old chests or trunks, which contain also some old record books, and until very recently contained all. Among these papers are valuation lists, unrecorded reports of committees, maps, plans, etc., of a value which cannot be estimated until they are needed. There are also old receipts, orders, and other documents long ago outlawed, which would seem to have no value, and which might be destroyed by duly authorized persons.

Occasionally a town has realized the importance of its records and papers, and has authorized some one to put them in order. In 1842 Lewis Bradford, who had been for many years town clerk of Plympton, by vote of the town put in order all the records and papers which could be found. He made an index of them at the time, and in one book containing tax lists made the following note, the concluding part of which holds good to-day: "The Assessors might have sewed their pamphlets of Assessments with twine, and yearly fastened them together as in this Book; and in that way their assessments might have been preserved in good order, and been much less liable to embezzlement. Some town officers are Do for the Present persons, or Do littles and do so little that in after times some of their doings are rather unintelligible."

A few towns are by special vote now having papers examined and arranged, and have collected from private sources public papers of value. When the time comes that town clerks are properly compensated, this work can be reasonably expected of them, as it is now unreasonably required by statute.

CHURCH RECORDS.

At every step in the work appertaining to the so-called church records difficulty arises from the want of a definition of the word church, and the uncertainty as to whether persons speak or write advisedly when referring to the church, society, or parish. It is almost impossible to obtain correct information in regard to their records for this reason. The original meaning of church was the Lord's house; but as in 1646 the "liberties of the churches" are a subject of legislation, and in 1668 the general court ordered that "by church is meant such as are in full communion only," the original meaning would seem to have been dropped. Neither in the third article of the Declaration of Rights nor again in eleventh of the amendments is the word used; but religious societies are given the right to elect their pastors and raise money for the maintenance of religious institutions. The later statutes, while usually using the word as applying to a worshipping body connected with a single religious society, allude to "pews in a church or meeting-house," and to "the diocese in which a Roman Catholic church is erected." They also recognize the "body of Christians known as the Protestant Episcopal Church" and "the trustees of any society of the Methodist Episcopal church, or of the African Methodist Episcopal Church." In common parlance, church is applied either to the structure or the denomination, being seldom used in the strict sense of a body distinct from a parish or society.

In the case of *Silsby v. Barlow and Others*, 16 Gray, 329, the court sets forth the difference between a church and society. In April, 1838, a Baptist church was organized at Pocasset, and afterwards by its agent, one Barlow, sued for possession of a legacy "to the Baptist Society in Pocasset, Sandwich."

In his opinion Judge Chapman said:—

A church is understood, among those whose polity is congregational or independent, to be a body of persons associated together for the purpose of maintaining Christian worship and ordinances. A religious society is a body of persons associated together for the purpose of maintaining religious worship only, omitting the sacraments. A church and society are often united in maintaining worship, and in such cases the society commonly owns the property and makes the pecuniary contract with the minister. But in many instances societies exist without a church, and churches without a society. Churches are not corporate bodies, and commonly have no occasion for the exercise of corporate powers. By our statutes their officers have sufficient corporate powers to enable them to hold any property that may be given to their church. Originally all our religious societies were corporate bodies. The towns at first exercised parochial powers, most of the people of this State being of one denomination. But, as varieties of opinion sprung up, it became necessary to separate the parochial from the municipal business, and the parishes formed separate organizations. Other religious societies were incorporated by special acts; but many congregations remained unincorporated. Some persons had conscientious scruples against corporations, and others preferred to manage their religious affairs in a different way. The statute of 1811, c. 6, § 3, was enacted for the benefit of such persons. It enabled unincorporated religious societies to take and hold property; manage, use, and employ the same; choose trustees, agents, and officers therefor; and constituted them corporations so far as might be necessary. The same provision was re-enacted in St. 1834, c. 183, § 5, and in the Rev. Sts., c. 20, § 25. This legacy in question not being given to the church, Mr. Barlow is not entitled to receive it. But the persons who usually attend worship at the meeting-house, whether members of the church, pewholders, or others, constitute such an unincorporated religious society as is provided for in Rev. Sts., c. 20, § 25; and they may choose an agent or trustee pursuant to that section, to whom the legacy should be paid.

In any reference to records few make the distinction here drawn, and moreover use parish and society as synonymous terms. By chapter 404 of the Acts of 1887 any church now existing or that may be hereafter organized may be incorporated, and many are availing themselves of this act to become incorporated.

That there may be some reliable information in regard to the names and organization or incorporation of the churches,

parishes, and religious societies in the State, and that it may be known what have and what should have records, an investigation has been commenced which promises good results. A circular was sent to the pastor of each of the two thousand and sixty organizations called churches, asking that forms containing the following questions be filled and returned by the clerks of whichever bodies existed in their form of organization:—

CITY OR TOWN OF——.

[In giving dates, please give the year, month, and day when possible, and give the ancient dates exactly as found in the ancient records; as Feb. 5, 1723—4, or 25d, 5m, 1660.]

1. Present legal name of the CHURCH.
2. Denomination.*
3. Former denomination,* if different.
4. Local name of the church, if different.
5. Former name or names of the church, if any.
6. When was the church organized under the present name?
7. When incorporated under the present name?
8. When was the name changed?
9. When organized under any former name?
10. When incorporated under any former name?
11. Present legal name of the PARISH.
12. Former name or names of the parish, if any?
13. When was the parish organized under the present name?
14. When incorporated under the present name?
15. When was the name changed?
16. When organized under any former name?
17. When incorporated under any former name?
18. Present legal name of the SOCIETY.
19. Former name or names of the society, if any.
20. When was the society organized under the present name?
21. When incorporated under the present name?
22. When was the name changed?
23. When organized under any former name?
24. When incorporated under any former name?
25. If there were or are any proprietors of the meeting-house, please give any facts obtainable in regard to name, dates of organization, incorporation, dissolution, etc.

Remarks:

—— ———, Clerk of Church.
 —— ———, Clerk of Parish.
 —— ———, Clerk of Society.

* Please give the denomination by its correct title, avoiding general terms, such as Calvinistic, Christian, Evangelical, Methodist, Orthodox, etc.

More than eight hundred replies have been received, and it is evident that the facts desired are too often unknown to those who should have them as a matter of record, and who ought to possess them to know of the legal standing of the several bodies.

This is a question constantly arising, and the difficulties under it are illustrated by the following case. The church edifice on Florence Street in the city of Boston, known as the Church of the Messiah, was very recently sold to a Jewish congregation. This congregation desired to mortgage the property to a savings bank; but, while its constitution and printed by-laws said that the name of the congregation should always be "Shaary Tefila," the legal name under which it was incorporated was "Congregation Shaary Tefila." As these differences could not be made to harmonize, the transaction fell through, to the disappointment of all parties.

Additional extinct churches have been reported as follows:—

[The following abbreviations are used in this table: Bapt., for Baptist; Cong., for Congregational; Presb., for Presbyterian; M. E., for Methodist Episcopal; Prot. Epis., for Protestant Episcopal; and Wes. Meth., for Wesleyan Methodist. The use of the dash signifies that information is wanting. The asterisk preceding a date signifies that it is the nearest date furnished.]

CITIES AND TOWNS.	Denomination	Distinguishing Name	Year in which Organized	Year in which Terminated	RECORDS	
					Years covered	In Possession of—
Ashburnham, BOSTON,	M. E.	—	*1800	1833	—	—
	Free Bapt.	—	*1834	1843	—	—
	Cong.	Neponset Cong.	1845	1859	—	Trinity Church, Neponset.
Holliston,	Presb.	Third.	1870	*1875	—	—
	Prot. Epis.	Church of Our Redeemer.	1865	—	—	—
Leyden,	Wes. Meth.	—	1842	1866	—	Present M. E. Church.
Oakham,	M. E.	—	*1865	—	—	—
TAUNTON,	—	Central Christian Society.	—	—	1848-1872	Old Colony Historical Society.

Records of the following extinct churches, which were reported in 1885 as in private hands, have been placed in city or town custody:—

Cummington, ...	First Congregational Society.
East Bridgewater, . . .	Methodist Episcopal.
GLOUCESTER, ...	Second Universalist.

In place of the recommendation in the last report, that a religious society after it has ceased to hold regular meetings for public worship for a fixed term of years should be dissolved, I would recommend the passage of the following bill:—

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE CUSTODY OF THE RECORDS OF A RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, CHURCH, PARISH, OR ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, WHICH HAS CEASED TO HOLD RELIGIOUS MEETINGS.

SECTION 1. When a church, parish, religious society, monthly meeting of the people called Friends or Quakers, or any body of persons, who have associated themselves together for the purpose of holding meetings for religious worship, shall cease for a term of two years to hold religious meetings regularly, the persons having the care of any of the records or registries of such church, parish, religious society, monthly meeting, or association, or of any church, parish, religious society, monthly meeting, or association connected therewith, shall deliver all such records to the clerk of the city or town in which such church, parish, religious society, monthly meeting or association is situated, and such clerk may certify copies thereof.

SECT. 2. Every person having any records of the deacons, church wardens, trustees, overseers, or other similar officers, of any of the assemblies or associations aforesaid, by whatever name called, shall deliver all such records to the clerk of the city or town in which such assembly or association is situated, and such clerk may certify copies thereof.

SECT. 3. If any church, parish, religious society, monthly meeting, or association, the records or registries of which, or of any officers of which, have been so delivered, shall resume regular religious meetings under its former name, or shall be legally incorporated with some church, parish, religious society, or monthly meeting, the clerk of said city or town shall, upon demand made in writing by a duly authorized person, deliver such records or registries to such person: provided, however, that said person shall, in writing, certify that to the best of his knowledge and belief said religious meetings are to be regularly continued, or such incorporation has been legally completed.

SECT. 4. Every person who, after demand made by the clerk entitled by law to have possession of the records or registries aforesaid, wrongfully detains the same, shall forfeit the sum of one hundred dollars.

COURT RECORDS.

I have not visited the offices of the clerks of the courts during the year, as their records are in the main as well provided for as they can be in their present quarters, and more important matters have demanded my attention. The rapid accumulation of papers in these offices makes the question of storage room serious, and an authorized destruction of such as shall be determined upon by some competent authority would seem advisable. The destruction of valueless papers is authorized in England.

RECORDS IN REGISTRIES OF DEEDS.

I have not considered it necessary to visit the several registries of deeds. The subject of indexes to which I called attention has received the consideration of a special committee of the Legislature, sitting during the recess, and reforms will doubtless be established.

I would repeat my suggestion in the last report, that the rapid accumulation of the records in the registries be checked to a degree by dispensing with verbiage in deeds.

A new building for the registry at Plymouth, undoubtedly fire-proof except in its fittings, has been completed during the year, giving much needed security, and room which can be fully appreciated only by those who knew its former cramped condition. The volumes have all been covered with canvas, numbered with large figures, and the office is in excellent condition.

The copying of records and plans in the registry of deeds for the northern district of Bristol County at Taunton, for the southern district registry at New Bedford, is progressing rapidly. Thirteen volumes of copies are bound and are being indexed. There will be about twenty-five more which will probably be completed during the coming year. There are about twenty-three thousand deeds to be included, covering the period from 1687 to 1837.

PROBATE RECORDS.

The insecurity of the files in the probate offices must again be referred to. Stealing, altering, and misplacing are dangers to which the papers are subject; and until some

legislation shall establish rules, they will continue. There seems to be no reason why original papers which have been recorded should be referred to except for special reasons, upon the validity of which the register should pass; but it is the custom, and an attempt by a register to break up the custom is sure to be met with opposition. Some registers have established rules for their own registries, which earn for them the reputation of being arbitrary among those accustomed to more lax rules elsewhere.

The danger to these records from fire will exist in most of the registries until new buildings are erected, fitted with non-combustible material. Until such time the original papers and the record of them should be separated. Had the fire in the probate office in Boston in June last been more serious, there would have been a popular clamor for some legislation upon this matter; and I trust it will not be delayed until serious results awaken the community to the danger to which these important records are exposed.

The registry at Plymouth has been removed to the new building designed for it and the registry of deeds, and, from being the most poorly accommodated, it is now one of the best. The indexing provided for by chapter 363 of the Acts of 1890 has been rapidly pushed, many volumes being already completed, containing indexes to the volumes and files. Many papers have been found to be missing, some unrecorded; and it may be remarked that it is only when some general work of this kind is undertaken that the extent of the loss of papers in a registry can be known. To provide greater security for the files and papers, I would recommend the passage of the following bill:—

AN ACT TO PROVIDE GREATER SECURITY FOR THE FILES AND
PAPERS IN OFFICES OF PROBATE.

SECTION 1. Every register of probate and insolvency shall keep all files and papers in his custody locked in the cases or other places provided for their safe keeping, except when they are wanted for use, and shall exhibit them for inspection only when he shall deem such inspection necessary or advisable.

SECT. 2. All shelving or other structure hereafter placed or erected in the office of the several registers of probate and

insolvency for the accommodation of the records, files, papers, and documents, shall be of fire-proof material.

SECT. 3. Any person who shall unlock any of the cases or other places provided for the files and papers aforesaid, and shall remove any of said files and papers therefrom without the permission of said register shall forfeit a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars.

TOWN CLERKS.

In the last report the subject of town clerks was treated at much length, and a compilation of the laws relating to their duties was presented. The compilation was made for the double purpose of giving the clerks, for the first time, a complete list of their duties, and to show the Legislature and the people what the requirements of the office were.

The report was sent to every city and town clerk; and, while many expressed themselves as fully appreciating that work and finding it of benefit, I regret that some admit never having seen the report, the reason given being that they receive such a mass of printed matter from the State offices and elsewhere, in which they have no interest and which they do not find time to examine, that this has been carelessly thrown with the rest, where neither they, the selectmen for whom many suggestions were intended which would be of benefit to the town if adopted, nor any citizen interested in the subject, would be likely to see it.

I would now respectfully call attention to the part of that report devoted to the subject of town clerks, and say, with the strongest possible emphasis, that, if the business of town meetings and the various boards is to be legally conducted and properly recorded, and the old records and important papers saved from further destruction, radical changes must be made. The office of clerk must be removed from politics and put upon a business basis.

The clerk must be elected for a longer term and properly compensated, and be clerk of all boards, except where a town is so large as to make it advisable to have a paid clerk of separate boards. The business corporation in which the stockholders elected their clerk upon political grounds, and then expected him to compensate himself out of fees which he could collect from the stockholders for services done

for them individually, not for the corporation, would soon find itself in the snarls of litigation and part of its business neglected, and would be fortunate if it did not eventually have to sell out to some better managed corporation near by. The cases are parallel. Some towns make political nominations of town clerks with the chance of annual changes; pay nothing for the work done for the town, but expect the clerk to compensate himself from fees for service rendered individuals.

The relation of the State to the town clerk is worthy of careful consideration. Nearly every Legislature directly imposes duties upon them, or indirectly requires certain things which necessitate work on their part, or put them to expense and inconvenience. Nine additional direct duties were imposed by the Legislature of 1891. Many of the requirements are, from the condition of affairs in a town, unreasonable and absurd, and are looked upon by the townspeople as such, and compliance with them is not expected, desired, or paid for. For instance, the clerk is required to keep all books of record and all important papers in the safe provided by the town; whereas, the only safe may be at a town hall, or a poor-house miles from his house, or place of business; and, aside from the unreasonableness of expecting him to go to the safe when necessary for his own purposes, the citizens would complain when calling upon the clerk if they were obliged to make the additional journey to the safe. The town clerk's office is by law made the repository of many records, books, plans, etc., when in fact his office, if such it can be called, is his dwelling, or a store or business office which may be his own or one in which he is employed. If it is his dwelling, he and his family have sacrificed a room for town use, in which the safe is placed and where as many public documents as the room will contain have been stored, the others being in such closets as can be spared, or in the attic or cellar. If his office is at a store or business office, one of two conditions of affairs is apt to exist. If the store is his own, the town is likely to expect him to provide for the town records in his safe; and, as he receives no compensation for services or rent, his own records naturally take precedence if either his books or the town

records are to be crowded out. If he is an employee in the store or office, he is at a disadvantage in not being at liberty to command the needed room either in or out of the safe, and the records must be a secondary consideration. These cases are not overdrawn, but can be cited, and the loss of, or damage to, records, can be directly traced to these causes.

The new election laws require careful study upon the part of the clerks, and put an immense amount of work upon them. For this the statute provides "suitable compensation;" but, whatever that may be, it is seldom paid. Very much of the work is of no importance to the towns-people, except as they form part of the whole people, the State requiring that matters shall be recorded and information obtained and transmitted for its value to the State as a whole. It would seem proper, therefore, that the State should pay a salary to every town clerk for the labor performed for the general good, and that the town should pay an additional amount, based upon its population. The humiliating and demoralizing system of making a public officer dependent in the least degree upon fees should be abolished in the towns, and fees for services rendered to individuals by the salaried clerk paid into the town treasury.

The following duties, in addition to those printed in the last report, were required of the town clerks by the Legislature of 1891.

The duties required by the provisions marked with an asterisk (*) are contingent upon the application of the act to the town.

He shall record:—

The taking of the oath by tellers appointed in town meetings.
[1891, c. 32, § 11.]

He shall file:—

The request of a candidate for town office that his nomination be withdrawn. [1891, c. 155.]

A copy of the rules and regulations made by the State Board of Agriculture in regard to the *Ocneria dispar* or gypsy moth, if they are found by the board to exist in the town. [1891, c. 210, § 3.]

* The petition of ten voters for a session of the registrars of voters. [1891, c. 242.]

* The schedule describing the property which any person, firm, or corporation proposes to sell to a town which has voted to establish a plant for manufacturing and distributing gas or electricity. [1891, c. 370, § 13.]

He shall receive or obtain : —

From the secretary of the Commonwealth blank forms for certificates of nomination of candidates for the office of representative in the general court, for the use of the presiding officer and secretary of any legal caucus or convention held for the nomination of said representatives. [1891, c. 329, § 2.]

From the secretary of the Commonwealth blank forms for the nomination of candidates for town offices, if ballots are printed and distributed at the public expense. [1891, c. 329, § 2.]

He shall return or transmit : —

* Within two weeks after any town has taken final action in pursuance of chapter 170 of the Acts of 1891, in relation to any highway or county bridge therein, a certified copy of the record of the town of such final action to the county commissioners. [1891, c. 170, § 6.]

* Within ten days after the acceptance of chapter 170 of the Acts of 1891, a certified copy of the vote accepting the same to the county commissioners and secretary of the Commonwealth. [1891, c. 170, § 7.]

He shall perform miscellaneous duties as follows : —

Shall send the State blanks and apparatus to the election officers of each precinct or town before the opening of the polls on the day of any election or meeting at which they are to be used, together with such blank forms and apparatus as may be approved by the selectmen. [1891, c. 328, § 3.]

Much of the service rendered by the clerk to individuals, such as issuing marriage licenses, burial permits, etc., must be done upon the minute, and he must hold himself in readiness for such calls, illustrating the quotation that "They also serve who only stand and wait;" but no thought is given to the fact that the holding himself in readiness is a tax upon his time, and it is not considered when compensation is proposed.

SAFES AND VAULTS.

The requirement of the statutes that cities and towns shall provide fire-proof safes for their records seems simple and sensible; but when the exact words of the requirement are quoted to some of the town officers it is looked upon as absurd, and they feel competent to decide as to what are "records" and "important papers," the latest being considered such, and those only being provided for. Without a statute definition of records which would enable me to demand that *all* records and papers should be protected, it has seemed useless to attempt to compel action; but most of the cities and towns have when notified taken some action. A few have done and probably will do nothing until compelled by threat of prosecution.

Since the cities and towns received the circular in 1889, calling attention to the law, fifty-five have reported as having purchased new safes; twenty-three as having built vaults; three as having made old ones fire-proof; and several have made appropriations or appointed committees to report upon the best plan to be pursued. A few have provided for keeping their records in private vaults. In addition to the cities and towns which have reported action, information has reached me that others have new safes or vaults, so that over one hundred may be said to have made their records more safe than before the commission commenced its work.

The ignorance existing in regard to safes and vaults is surprising. Town officers have considered well-constructed vaults failures because of their dampness, when they either have never been properly dried before using, or are opened only at long intervals, and then without any care as to whether the day is dry or damp. New safes are also considered unsatisfactory because their contents gather dampness, when the failure to open them frequently is the only reason for it. The end aimed at by manufacturers is to obtain a filling for safes which when heated shall generate steam; and the safe that will generate it for the longest time is the best, as the contents will not char or ignite in steam.

The melting of leather bindings referred to on page 74 is owing to the presence of the steam, which reduces the leather

to glue. A degree of heat which, dry, would ruin the contents of a safe, would, if moist, not affect paper or canvas, but melt leather and cause it to damage the paper. Persons who have condemned their safes because of this melting would undoubtedly have lost the contents had not the safe contained enough of moisture to cause the melting. With canvas bindings no damage to the contents would have ensued.

Vaults have been constructed with a single door of plate iron, the heating of which would be sure to ignite their contents; and records in vaults with inner and outer doors are exposed to fire by the neglect of persons to close the inner doors. The only object of the two doors is to provide an air space between them as a non-conductor.

Every vault and safe should be opened for a time at least once a week, and some vaults should be open daily; but not until a town office is established and the clerk feels that the responsibility is placed upon him will there be much improvement in this matter. Meanwhile, the records will continue to mould.

COPYING.

The statute is peremptory in the requirement that, when records are becoming worn, mutilated, or illegible, city governments and selectmen shall have fair and legible copies seasonably made. There are few of the oldest cities and towns where some copying should not be done; but I have made no effort to have it done, for the reason stated in the last report,—that copyists who can read the ancient chirography, or appreciate the fact that a copy should be a copy and not an abstract, are so few that accurate copies are not likely to be made. In what purported to be a copy of the first volume of a town record, made many years ago, the copyist had certified that it was a true copy of *the important matters*, to which the clerk added that it was expressed in the copyist's own language.

In one town the copyist omitted what he deemed unimportant in the volume copied; and among the omissions were the names of the representatives elected, and no record of them exists.

As the strongest evidence of the statement that experts only must be employed to copy ancient records, a fac-simile of an ancient paper in possession of the Essex Institute is herewith inserted, which is less difficult to decipher than are many of the old town records.

A certificate of a city or town clerk to the correctness of a copy has been considered sufficient to constitute it a record ; but careful reading of section 7 of chapter 37 shows no authority for certification of copies by the clerk unless they are made for another town. In the copying of county records the copyists are sworn and certify to the correctness of the copies, and this should be the law in regard to city and town records.

BINDING.

In the second report the use of canvas for binding in the county offices was commended, as the leather bindings in some of them were rapidly deteriorating, supposedly from the effect of the gas-heated air. Its use for all bindings is now urged, as being more resistant to heat. In several fires where safes containing town records were subjected to a strong heat, not, however, sufficient to cause combustion in them; or to injure the paper, the leather bindings melted, and were not only destroyed but the melted leather formed a dark-colored glue which injured the records. With canvas bindings no damage would have resulted. The reason for this is set forth under the heading "Safes and Vaults."

While the oldest records in nearly all of the towns need renovating and binding, very little has been done, owing to the distance of the clerks from binderies where it would be safe to trust them, or where the work could be expertly done ; and the recommendation is renewed, that, in the event of the continuance of the commission, the clerks shall have authority to place their records in charge of the commissioner for rebinding, the expense to be charged to the several towns.

RECORDING OFFICERS.

I would renew the recommendation made in the previous reports, that the terms of the recording officers be longer.



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An agreement between the Town of Hoxton & John P. Woodman
of 4th day of Apr 12 January 1638.

John P. Woodman is to build a meeting house of 20 foot long, 10
breadth of the old building with a gallery underneath to the
pew. One door of opening of 12 foot long & 4 foot
in height above the top of the building. The said window
is to be of brick or stone. The building is to have five
sufficient windows. 2 on each side & 2 at the end.
& a pair of stairs to ascend to the gallery suitable to the
pew. The building is to be covered with roof of shingles
plumb & the board you shall to work left. And all the
to be sufficient for the roof of the building & the roof of the
- chimney with stone or brick with rafters & all things necessary
by the said John P. Woodman. In consideration whereof
the said John P. Woodman is to have 63^l in money to be
paid at 3 payments. The first payment 21^l at the beginning
of the work. The 2nd payment 21^l when the frame is
wrought. The 3rd payment 21^l when it is to be paid at
the finishing of the work. And it is agreed that the
Town of Hoxton shall pay the said John P. Woodman
all the debts 3 months before the town is to pay the
the 16th of June the said John P. Woodman 3^l off.
The is to abate it. And the said John P. Woodman
does consent to finish it by the 15th day of Apr 4th
month next ensuing or else he shall be
responsible for the said debts & costs.

Jo: Endicott

John P. Woodman

Jo: Woodman
Wm: Halloway
Samuel Lupton
Roger Smith

FIRES.

As the last report was going to press, a large fire in Athol, Dec. 21, 1890, partially destroyed the office of the selectmen, but fortunately the corner of the building in which their safe stood was saved. Many files which should have been in a safe were more or less damaged. The fire fortunately did not reach the store in which an old safe used by the clerk is situated, or its contents would undoubtedly have been damaged if not destroyed.

A large fire in Orange, Nov. 7, 1891, destroyed an old safe belonging to the town, which was in the business office of the town clerk. The bindings of all the records in it were ruined, and the pages were more or less injured by water and the melted leather. The original returns of births, marriages, and deaths for the current year had not been recorded, and, not being in the safe, the record is destroyed.

On the 19th of June, 1891, electric light wires in the registry of probate in Boston started a fire there. Fortunately it was in office hours, and was extinguished with a fire extinguisher before it gained headway. Had this occurred in the night, the damage by fire, or by water, which would be nearly as damaging to records and files, would have been incalculable. A temporary excitement was occasioned, and the condemnation of the building was general; but the same condition of affairs is allowed to remain.

AUCTION SALES OF RECORDS.

The temptation to retain papers belonging in public custody, or to pilfer from the files in the public offices, is increased by the auction sales, where papers which are the property of the State or of cities and towns are boldly advertised and sold. At a sale in New York in 1876, a record of births in Middleborough from 1714 to 1730, and some of the records of the treasurer of Hanover, were sold. Fifty-three pages of the record of the trial of Hugh Parsons of Springfield on a charge of witchcraft, before Mr. Pyncheon, said to have been torn from the records, were sold at the same sale. A large collection of papers advertised as "Official Papers of the Provincial Congress of Massa-

chusetts at the most interesting and important portion of its deliberations,—the period preceding Lexington and Bunker Hill,” were advertised to be sold in Boston, but were replevined by the Commonwealth. At the first sale of the Leffingwell collection of papers, recently held in Boston, the city of Boston purchased forty-four lots, at a cost of nearly one thousand dollars, nearly every one of which was once the property of the city. At the second sale fifty-two lots of papers belonging to the Commonwealth were sold. It may be that to secure such papers that are out of proper custody there is no remedy except to purchase them; but more stringent measures should be taken to prevent the loss of others, and the penalty attached to the offence should be sufficient to act as a menace.

RECORD INKS.

In the third report the subject of inks for records was very fully treated, and the result of the examination of sixty-four inks was given. That the report upon the various inks was correct, may be assumed from the fact that, while a copy of the report was sent to every manufacturer, no complaint of any incorrectness has been made to the office. In that report I said: “I have been asked by several of the recording officers to recommend a permanent ink, and some persons who knew of this investigation have expected that it would result in the recommendation of a particular ink for records. Such a recommendation would be an official endorsement which would be unjust, if not actionable, unless every ink in the market had been considered and examined chemically.”

“What I hope chiefly to accomplish by this investigation is to awaken persons making records, official or other, to the necessity of the greatest care in the selection of inks and their treatment, and to call their attention to the important fact that the very quality—easy flow and freedom from sediment—that makes many inks popular with the persons doing the recording, is their worst recommendation for records.”

The interest has been awakened, and many inquiries have been made for the report from corporations, attorneys-at-

law, scientific men, and others who appreciate the value of permanency in ink. Some of the recording officers have discarded inks there condemned which they were using.

Several requests have been made for the name of the best ink, accompanied by the statement that the reply would be considered confidential; and the question has often been asked, "Is ——'s ink a good one?" It was distinctly stated in the report that no attempt was made to designate a "best" ink, or a "good" one, but to show what inks found to be in use were or were *not suitable for records*. Good commercial inks may be unsuitable for records, and good record inks too thick for rapid commercial work; and the same manufacturer may make, as some do, an excellent ink for each purpose. On page 130 of that report seventeen inks which need *not be discarded* for records are specified by number, the corresponding name being given on pages 122 and 123. The remaining thirty-four there named should not be used for records, though they may be excellent inks for other purposes.

Many of the inks which should not be used upon records are free flowing and more agreeable to use than permanent inks, containing more body. As long as recording and copying is paid for by the page, and the object is to accomplish the most in the least time, these inks will be in popular use, and used, and blotted off the paper before they have much more than colored it, only to disappear eventually. The State should set a standard for a record ink; and, while our present system of keeping records and furnishing supplies will not allow that its use be required on all public records, as in England, it would seem practicable for the secretary of the Commonwealth to advertise for proposals for inks of a certain standard, which the manufacturers should be bound to maintain, and that these should be used in all the State offices. With a State standard ink adopted, its use by recording officers would soon follow.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

In addition to the legislation proposed by the bills presented under their appropriate headings, I would recommend the passage of the following bill to supply defects

and deficiencies in chapter 37 of the Public Statutes, relating to public records : —

AN ACT IN RELATION TO THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF CITIES AND TOWNS, AND FIXING THE TERMS OF OFFICE OF CITY AND TOWN CLERKS.

SECTION 1. The word record shall mean all books of public record or registry made in the handwriting of the person or persons required to keep records, or of persons authorized by them to keep records, and all copies of the same made by order of a city or town; all papers which are required to be filed with any city or town officer or board of officers, and all maps and plans made in conjunction with any of the public work of a city or town.

SECT. 2. City governments and selectmen shall provide, at the expense of their respective cities and towns, fire-proof rooms, vaults, or safes of ample size for the preservation of all records belonging to such cities or towns, and the clerk of each city and town, except as otherwise provided, shall keep in such fire-proof rooms, vaults, or safes all such records at all times except when they are wanted for use.

SECT. 3. The records of every city or town shall be open for public inspection and examination under the supervision of the officer having the custody of the same, or of some person duly authorized by him to exhibit them. And said officer shall on payment of a reasonable fee therefor, compare and certify all copies properly and correctly made.

SECT. 4. The selectmen of every town shall cause a permanent record book to be kept, in which all votes, orders, and proceedings shall be recorded.

SECT. 5. City governments and selectmen shall have all books of public record belonging to their respective cities or towns, substantially bound. When any of said records are becoming worn, mutilated, or illegible they shall have the same seasonably renovated and repaired, and shall have fair and legible copies seasonably made. And for the purpose of said renovating and repairing or copying, they may cause said records to be placed in the custody of the Commissioner on Public Records of Parishes, Towns, and Counties, who shall have such renovating and repairing or copying done at the expense of their respective cities or towns.

SECT. 6. The persons employed by county commissioners, city governments, or selectmen to make authorized copies of any records under the provisions of this act, or of chapter 37 of the Public Statutes shall be sworn to the faithful discharge of their

duties, and shall certify the copies made by them as aforesaid. Any such authorized copies heretofore made shall be certified under oath by the copyist or by any person employed by said county commissioners, city governments, or selectmen for that purpose.

SECT. 7. At the annual meeting held in every town in the year eighteen hundred and ninety-three, and every third year thereafter, there shall be a town clerk elected who shall serve for the term of three years, and who shall, during his term of office, except as hereinafter provided, be the clerk of all boards of town officers, but shall not be a member of any.

SECT. 8. The clerk of every town shall receive annually a salary of one hundred dollars to be paid by the Commonwealth in equal quarterly payments; and in addition thereto shall receive ten cents per capita of the population as given by the last preceding census, either State or United States, to be paid him in equal quarterly payments by said town.

If a town shall be divided, or any part shall be set off to a city or to another town or other towns, the clerk of either town may request the assessors of the cities or towns whose population is affected by such changes to make an estimate of the population of said towns as then constituted, and the assessors aforesaid shall forthwith make such estimate, and the part of the salary of the clerks of said towns, to be paid by said towns, shall then be calculated upon this estimate until the next census shall fix the population of said towns.

SECT. 9. All fees heretofore payable to the town clerks shall be collected by them and paid to the treasurer of their respective towns on or before the tenth day of each month.

SECT. 10. The town clerk shall record all votes passed at the meeting at which he is elected, and at all other meetings held during his continuance in office, and all reports of committees presented at any of such meetings which are not by statute or town by-laws required to be printed, and keep such records as the several boards of town officers are by statute required to keep, except as provided in section thirteen of this chapter.

SECT. 11. It shall be the duty of city and town clerks to prosecute in an action of tort in the name of their respective cities and towns, for the recovery of any penalty or forfeiture imposed by sections two and three of chapter thirty-two of the Public Statutes or any amendment thereof.

SECT. 12. The selectmen of every town shall provide an office for the use of the town clerk, and shall also provide a sign with the name of the town followed by the words "town clerk's office." in plain characters thereon, with sufficient board space immediately

below for posting thereon the legal notices required by law to be posted in towns, which sign and board space shall be placed and kept on or at the outside of the front door of the office of every town clerk, and said board shall always be one of the public places upon which any such legal notice may be posted.

SECT. 13. In any city or town in which the several boards or departments shall have separate offices for the deposit of their records and transaction of business, each of such boards or departments may elect or appoint a person to be secretary or clerk of such board or department, who shall keep a record of all votes, orders, or proceedings of such boards or departments, and such person shall be the custodian of their records, and keep them in fire-proof rooms, vaults, or safes, as hereinbefore provided. The treasurer of any city or town having such separate office shall be the custodian of his records and shall keep them in fire-proof rooms, vaults, or safes as hereinbefore provided.

SECT. 14. The books, reports, and laws furnished to cities and towns shall, except when placed in a public library, as provided in section eleven of chapter forty of the Public Statutes, be kept in the custody of the city or town clerk, or by some person duly authorized by him to keep the same. Said books, reports, and laws shall be kept in the book-cases provided therefor at all times when not in use.

SECT. 15. Any records of a city or town which have been left incomplete shall be made up and completed from the files and usual memoranda as far as possible, by the city or town clerk, or by the secretary or clerk of the board or department to which said records respectively belong.

SECT. 16. Beginning with the year eighteen hundred and ninety-three city clerks shall hold office for the term of three years.

SECT. 17. Every city and town, for each month it neglects or refuses to perform any duty required by this chapter shall forfeit twenty dollars. Every city or town clerk, and every clerk or secretary of a board or department as provided herein, or other person who neglects or refuses to perform any such duty shall forfeit for each offence ten dollars.

SECT. 18. The word town in this act shall not include cities.

SECT. 19. All acts and parts of acts inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed.

ROBERT T. SWAN,

Commissioner.

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